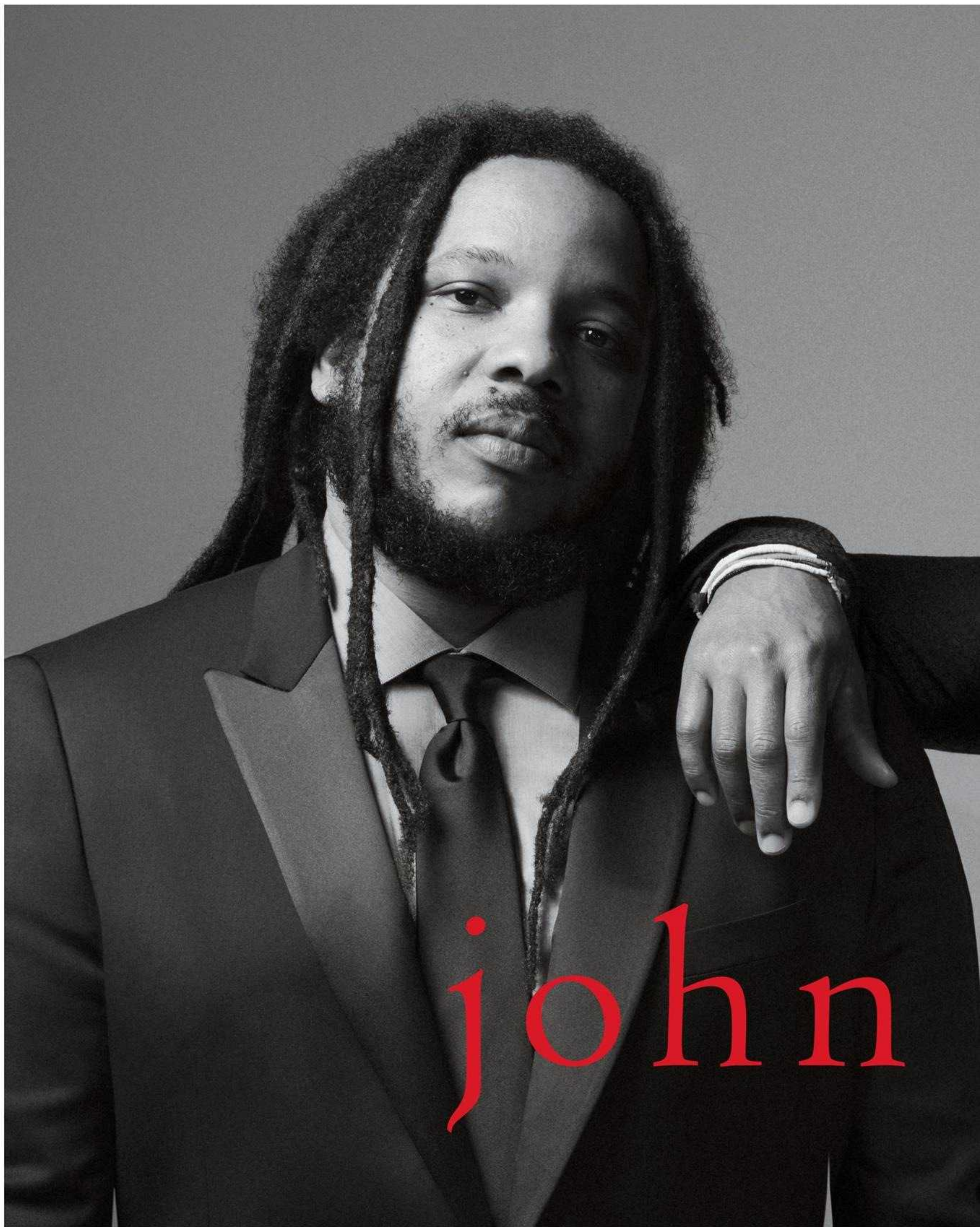


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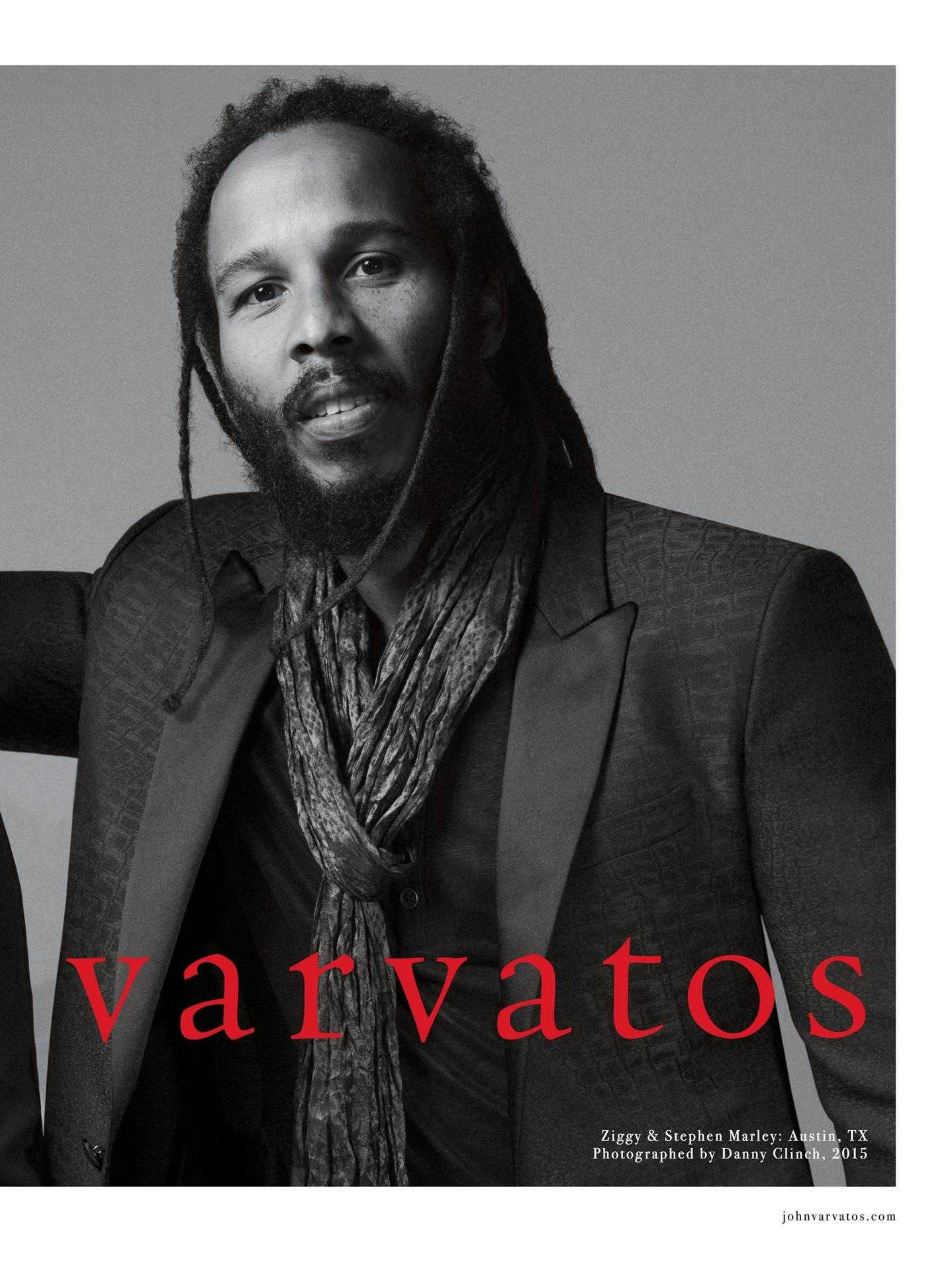
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JUNE 2015

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*Playmate
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Ziggy & Stephen Marley: Austin, TX
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PLAYBILL

For some, freedom is simple: a paid-off mortgage, a week on a sailboat, a six-pack after work. Then there's Harry Devert. After his monotonous finance job drove him to the brink, Devert swapped his \$2,500 watch for a motorcycle he didn't know how to ride and took off from New York for the World Cup in Brazil. When his body turned up in Mexico, it became clear he'd encountered more than thrills. **Jason McGahan** unravels the strange saga in *A Wrong Turn in Mexico*. What's more liberating (momentarily, at least) than the sight of a beautiful woman? *Artistry in Rhythm*, photographer **Victoria Janashvili**'s pictorial with world-class Russian gymnast and model Kira Dikhtyar, provides a convincing answer—and further evidence that the human body is the highest form of art. Speaking of bodies of art, our Playmate of the Year has been announced, and another stunner joins that rarefied sisterhood. **Michael Bernard**, no stranger to the demands of framing our beauties, shot smoking-hot **Dani Mathers** on the road to Hollywood, as befits her rising-star status. Next, in the *Playboy Interview*, writer, TV commentator and scholar of religions **Reza Aslan** has the unenviable job of defending Islam to a terrorized world—one he performs so masterfully, you'll likely see things through a new lens when he's finished. We have two stories on odd addictions this month: First, brilliant sitcom writer **Ted Cohen** offers fiction about a man addicted to being a dick; in *Odin*, the death of a dog from a broken marriage prompts flashbacks and heinous thoughts that become a study in the limits of misanthropy. Second, in *Going Deep*, **Adam Skolnick** reports on athletes addicted to near-drowning—otherwise known as the extreme sport of free diving, which pits man against himself as he plunges as far into the deep as he can go. It's all about that post-dive buzz. Or, for most of us, that post-cocktail buzz, which **Alia Akkam** serves by the barrel in our 2015 Bar Guide, *Just Drink It, Don't Overthink It*. For a buzzkill, see *No Sex, Please, We're Japanese*, **Neal Gabler**'s exploration of the world's growing lack of interest in sex. He reports on the problem's epicenter, a country where cyber fantasies have replaced actual dating. What lessons can be drawn for our shores? Better delete Tinder before you dig in. Finally, tape up for 20 rounds against Fox Business Network reporter **Charlie Gasparino**, who explains in *20Q* what 25 years as a financial journalist (and ex-boxer) have taught him about the mob we call Wall Street. Having the confidence to call out the powerful on their bullshit? That's freedom. Let it ring.



Jason McGahan



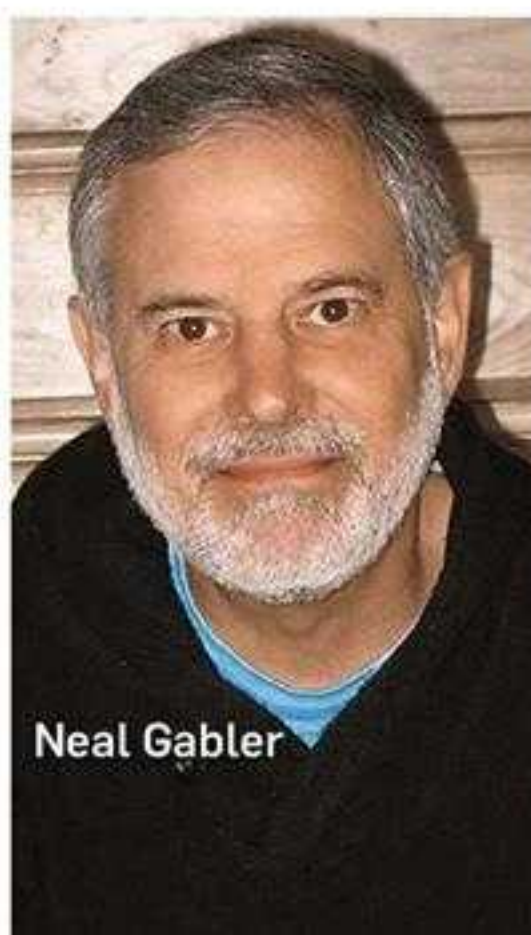
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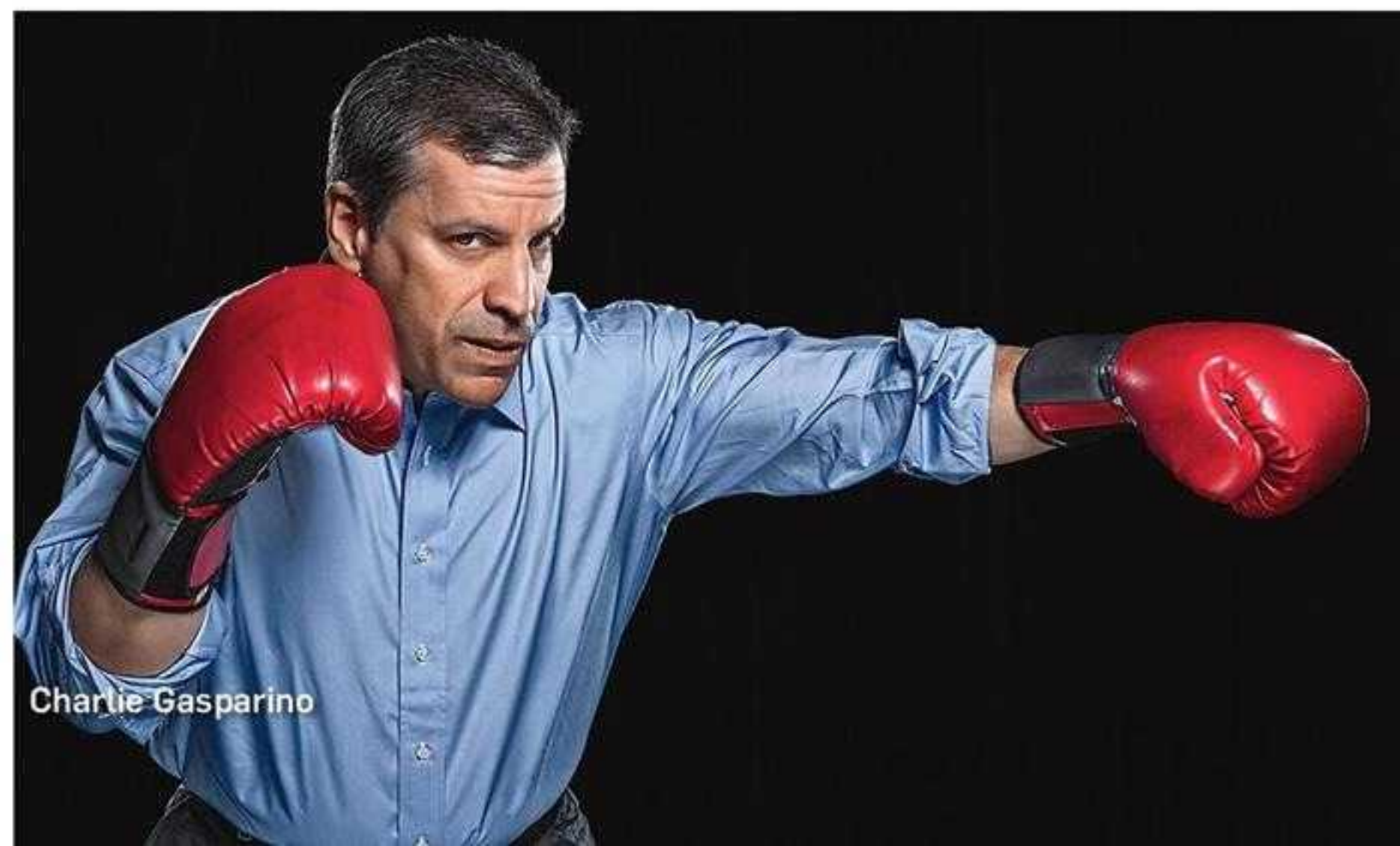
Michael Bernard with PMOY Dani Mathers



Alia Akkam



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PHOTOGRAPHY,
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20Q: **Charlie Gasparino**

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GAME NIGHT AT THE MANSION

❖ If battling Playmates in a video game tournament at the Playboy Mansion sounds like your unattainable fantasy, prepare to be jealous. For an episode of their web series *Gamer Next Door*, Miss October 2012 **Pamela Horton** (left) and Miss June 2012 **Amelia**

Talon (right) invited expert button-masher Aaron Bleyaert (center), who teaches Conan O'Brien how to play popular video games on *Conan*, to the Mansion's game house for a few matches of virtual combat. After facing off with Bleyaert in *Resident*

Evil: Revelations 2, Pamela and Amelia, who'll be at E3 in L.A. this month, say they could teach the carrot-topped funnyman a thing or two themselves. "Conan might be a little intimidated by us, though," says Pamela, laughing. In our opinion, he'd be a fool not to be.

Playboy

PAST and PRESENT

• In 1959 the Playboy Jazz Festival debuted at Chicago Stadium with an all-star billing that included Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald (below center). Comedian Mort Sahl (below right) emceed, seats sold for

about \$3 each and the concert drew 68,000 attendees. In 1979 the festival moved to the Hollywood Bowl, where Hef made it an annual event. This year's concert (June 13 and 14) features Aloe Blacc, Herbie Hancock and more.



LIKE MOTHER...

• PMOY 1982 **Shannon Tweed's** latest reality show, *Shannon & Sophie*, focusing on her relationship with her daughter, premiered on cable network Up.



HOT SHOTS

• Fashion magazine *i-D* hired Miss June 2004 **Hiromi Oshima** to photograph emerging musicians including Blood Orange and Connan Mockasin.





PLAYBOY



THE SWIMSUIT ADDITION

➤ “As part of the PLAYBOY family, I traveled a lot and became influenced by fashion around the world,” says Miss July 2004 **Stephanie Glasson**. “I live on the beach now and spend most of my summer in swimwear, so I decided to design my own line,

especially since starting a business was always a dream of mine.” After three years of development, Stephanie is now selling her collection, Sadie Ray Swimwear, online. “My designs represent me in a plethora of ways: unique, fun, sophisticated and of course sexy.”



NICE INK

• In our April issue, writer Jessica Ogilvie traveled to Texas with photographer Rylan Perry to meet three renegade country-rock bands that are reinventing the genre. Colton James, bass player for the Dirty River Boys, was so ecstatic about the story (*The New Bad Boys of Country*

Music), he tattooed the iconic Rabbit Head on his right ankle. “It’s fucking awesome to be in PLAYBOY,” says James. “It was the first magazine I ever saw. I was like, I have to get a tattoo.” They say a rabbit’s foot brings good luck; perhaps a Rabbit near your foot can do the same?



.COM

1

JESSICA BARTH Q&A

• The actress, who reprises her role as Tami-Lynn in *Ted 2*, answers some burning questions on the set of her *Becoming Attraction* photo shoot.

2

DIVING INTO THE ABYSS

• Watch a breathtaking video of one free diver’s descent into the deep blue sea, as profiled in *Going Deep* (page 66).

3

A DATE WITH DANI

• Go behind the scenes with this year’s Playmate of the Year, Dani Mathers.

EASTER TREAT

• Miss February 1990 **Pamela Anderson**, still ravishing at 47, stopped by the Mansion for the annual Easter egg hunt—and to say hi to an old friend.



PHOTO FINISH

• Talk about a runner’s high. Miss September 2014 **Stephanie Branton** smashed a 5K race to support CRE Outreach, which aids military veterans in L.A.



OMG, BUNNIES!



➤ In case you missed it, Apple released a bevy of new iPhone emojis. Our favorite? This leporid pair, who look strikingly similar to some girls we know.

DEAR PLAYBOY



Veep Show

As White House stage manager for the worst eight years in modern American history, Dick Cheney delivers a delicious irony by calling Barack Obama “the worst president” in his lifetime (*Playboy Interview*, April). Cheney takes no responsibility for creating the wholly preventable disaster in Iraq, for putting two wars and Medicare Part D on a credit card or for presiding over the most serious economic train wreck in decades. Nor does he seem capable of giving Obama any credit for getting our economy back on its feet, for tracking down Osama bin Laden—or for anything else. The interview seals Cheney’s reputation as a partisan hack rather than a leader or statesman.

Michael Reinemer
Annandale, Virginia

I had great expectations for the Cheney interview. What a disappointing piece of fluff. He rails against Obama without answering one question about nonexistent

weapons of mass destruction, his justification for the Iraq invasion or the fact that Iraq’s problems are his doing. You had him in the chair and you blew it.

Craig Meacham
Truckee, California

Cheney and I see eye-to-eye on nothing—except the importance of PLAYBOY. You landed a huge name and published a thought-provoking piece.

Frank Bell
New York, New York

Cheney is being too kind when he critiques Obama as the worst president of his lifetime. Cheney was born during the FDR administration, which means he has only 12 presidents to compare Obama with.

Eugene R. Dunn
Medford, New York

With all his medical issues, one can’t help but be awed by the strength Cheney shows. I have always been fascinated by the audacity of those who, like him, act so cavalierly toward the lives of others yet fight so tenaciously when it comes to preserving their own.

Leonard Stegmann
Half Moon Bay, California

Cheney’s life is proof positive of how far unyielding certitude can take one. No agonizing reappraisals for this man. He may have been frequently wrong but was never in doubt.

Eric Peter
Wexford, Pennsylvania

MAP KVETCH

I’m not sure where Jessica Ogilvie thought she was, but Gruene Hall is not situated in a “thick green swampy town near the southern tip of Texas” (*The New Bad Boys of Country Music*, April). It’s in the small town of Gruene, Texas, about 12 miles northeast of New Braunfels in Texas Hill Country, near the center of the state. But what really amazes me is that she fails to mention the Austin music scene—home of both the old and the new bad boys of country and the heart of Texas music.

Bob Stephenson
Clute, Texas

The honky-tonk is indeed deep in the heart of Texas.

ADVANTAGE PLAYBOY

I love David Bellemere’s tennis-court pictorial of Katrina Elizabeth (*Match Point*, March), but the otherwise fantastic image on page 59 looks photoshopped to add a tennis ball that

obscures part of her body. You shouldn’t censor photos; it kills the artistic value.

Brett Stephens
Kansas City, Missouri

Your eyes deceive you. Playboy Photo Director Rebecca H. Black confirms the image was shot like that; no tennis balls were added.

STRONGLY WORDED

Writer Ethan Brown seems to revere Lil Boosie—an overrated artist whose fame is based on hatred of law enforcement—as the next coming of Jesus Christ (*The Resurrection of Lil Boosie*, March). Brown portrays Louisiana law enforcement in a negative light while praising Boosie’s lyrics (“hands up” and “shoot the cops”) as the protest anthems of Ferguson, Missouri. Now that the attorney general says Michael Brown didn’t have his hands up and that two police officers have been shot in Ferguson, perhaps Ethan Brown will reconsider implying Boosie’s lyrics are harmless.

Nolan Kelley
Maurepas, Louisiana

DE-PANTSING

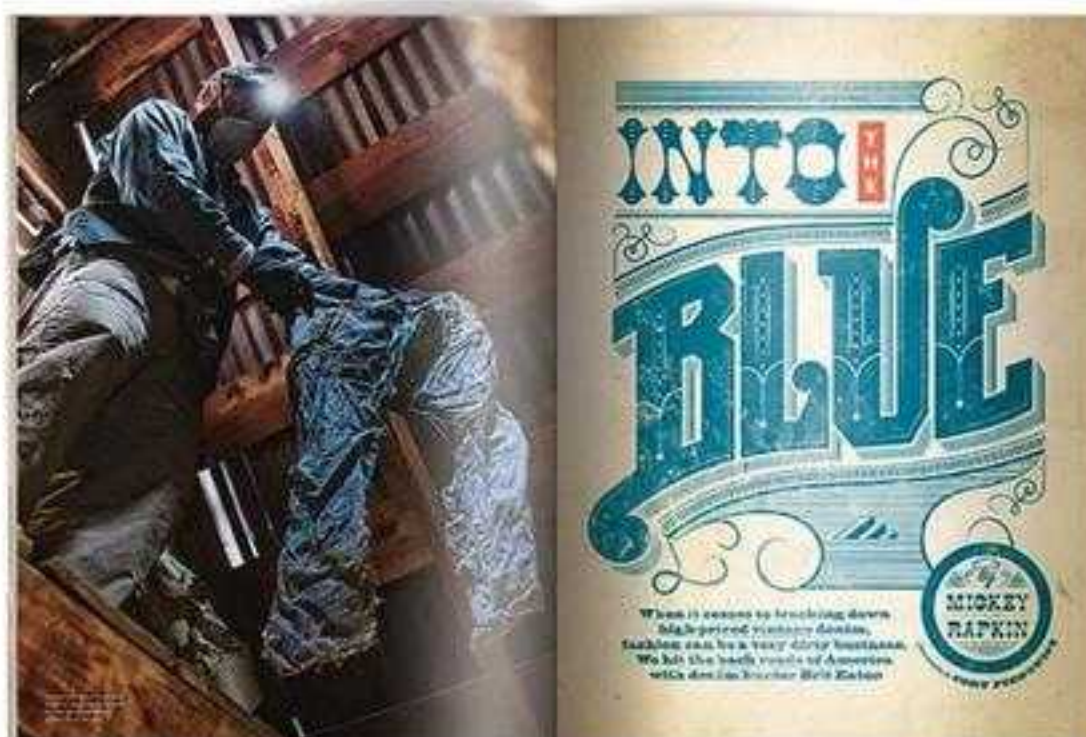
Thank you for publishing Mickey Rapkin’s denim safari (*Into the Blue*, March). His article is an intimate portrait of fire-cracker Brit Eaton and his adventures in deserted mine shafts and old barns. I could practically smell the cat piss.

Alexis Whitham
Oakland, California

I enjoyed reading about Brit Eaton but was annoyed to learn he recovers vintage denim from “abandoned farmhouses.” Chances are those dilapidated homes still belong to someone and “Indiana Jeans” is stealing from the owner. And if the jeans have historical value, shouldn’t he follow the wise words of Indiana Jones? To wit, “They belong in a museum!”

Bob Green
Helena, Montana

Brit Eaton responds: “I’m no more a thief than is a bird that finds an empty nest and picks out a few twigs with which to build its own nest. And I have indeed donated and sold clothing pieces to museums.”



Like most PLAYBOY articles, *Into the Blue* is simultaneously entertaining and enlightening. Rapkin says copper crotch rivets disappeared because of wartime rationing, but I remember a different story. According to a show I saw, a Levi Strauss company bigwig on a camping trip experienced a phenomenon that led directly to the disappearance of the crotch rivet. It was common to squat around the campfire, and that copper rivet was exceedingly efficient at transferring a searing pinpoint burn to the family jewels. Soon after the bigwig’s trip, the jeans were constructed without that rivet.

Scott Neal
Portland, Oregon

Who knew this would be such a hot-button issue? Your story is a great fireside tale, but the demise of the copper crotch rivet due to rationing is a fact our research editors confirmed with Levi’s.

ALL ABOUT OIL

Robert Levine says “higher oil prices are inevitable” (“Cheap and Crude,” *Forum*, April). His solution for dealing with changing oil prices: Slap a tax on gasoline to make alternatives affordable. I have searched in vain for evidence that this would work. Fixing climate change is the only valid reason to encourage large-scale adoption of alternatives to

fossil gasoline. It requires a global cap on carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels, which need to be phased out by the end of this century. Low oil prices would help this transition, which would take at least 50 years. For example, solar gasoline—which cannot warm the climate because burning it adds no carbon dioxide to the atmosphere—can fully replace fossil gasoline. (Solar gasoline can be made with solar energy, atmospheric carbon dioxide and water.) Consistently low oil prices lead to lower commodity prices, reducing construction costs for renewable energy facilities. There is a good case for placing a global cap on fossil carbon dioxide emissions. There is no case for a gasoline tax.

Kevin Cudby

Wellington, New Zealand

Cudby is author of From Smoke to Mirrors: How New Zealand Can Replace Fossil Liquid Fuels With Locally Made Renewable Energy by 2040.

OH, KAYSLEE

My blood pressure shot up when I saw Kayslee Collins (*Behind the Music*, April). How about more of her?

Donald Jean

Richmond, Quebec

I'm sure I wasn't the only one blown away by the breathtaking beauty of Kayslee Collins. She's wonderful; her confidence shows. Your magazine is unparalleled.

Ryan Mackey

Conneaut, Ohio

I'm a longtime PLAYBOY reader. Without exaggeration, Kayslee Collins is the most gorgeous Playmate of all time (*Venus in*



Is Kayslee Collins dangerous to your health?

Furs, January/February). I subscribe but bought extra copies—some for friends.

Walter L. Sherfey

Jonesborough, Tennessee

AMBASSADOR GEARHEAD

Considering the U.S. effort to reestablish diplomatic ties with Cuba, and all the vintage American iron rolling about on that island (*Engine Trouble*, March), it would be appropriate if the president appointed Jay Leno as our ambassador to Cuba. As a well-known car guy, he'd be the perfect choice for smoothly engaging the gears between our two countries.

John Betsill

Acworth, Georgia

FRECKLE FACE

PLAYBOY always has the world's finest women. It's rare that I'm stunned by beauty (usually it's race cars), but Chelsie Aryn is the most exquisite woman I've ever seen (*Once Upon a Time in the West*, March). My immediate impression: She's devastating.

Matt Bauer

Plano, Texas

Ah, you let Chelsie Aryn wear her mask of freckles. Thanks.

Ken Crockett

Austin, Texas

THE RULE OF THREE

Regarding how the FBI brought down the Silk Road sites (*Web of Lies*, April), there's an old Russian saying to keep in mind: "When three meet to conspire, two are informants, and one is a fool."

Justin Skywatcher

Wellsburg, West Virginia

MORE ON DICK CHENEY

Cheney? Really? Was Satan on vacation?

Richard Hodges

Plano, Texas

Instead of being interviewed in PLAYBOY, Cheney should be in the Hague, as should George W. Bush and Paul Wolfowitz.

Stephen Van Eck

Lawton, Pennsylvania

Cheney's arrogance about Guantánamo is mind-boggling. There's never an excuse for torture. Just ask John McCain.

Leonard McManis

Rockford, Illinois



Kitty's Got Claws

Azealia's pictorial (*Wild and Uncensored*, April) is sexy and sassy, as is she. I like a woman who speaks her mind even when she knows she'll catch heat.

Jessica Jones

Chicago, Illinois

To support everyone's views, regardless of their harmful words, is certainly your choice—that's one of the freedoms we enjoy in America. Azealia Banks is so self-absorbed she forgets (or doesn't realize) that the country she professes to hate gives her that freedom.

Julie Tilert

Greenville, South Carolina

Banks says, "I hate fat white Americans" and "I'm going to call you a fag or a cracker or a bitch." This is the exact opposite of what I expect from a magazine that fought for racial equality by featuring black models, including Jennifer Jackson (March 1965), Jean Bell (October 1969) and Darine

Stern (October 1971) during a time when it was more or less unheard of. I support free speech and truly appreciate Banks's talent, intelligence and beauty, but I feel that by featuring her on your cover you're saying that racism and the pejorative use of the word *fag* are acceptable.

Rachel Gilbert

Chandler, Arizona

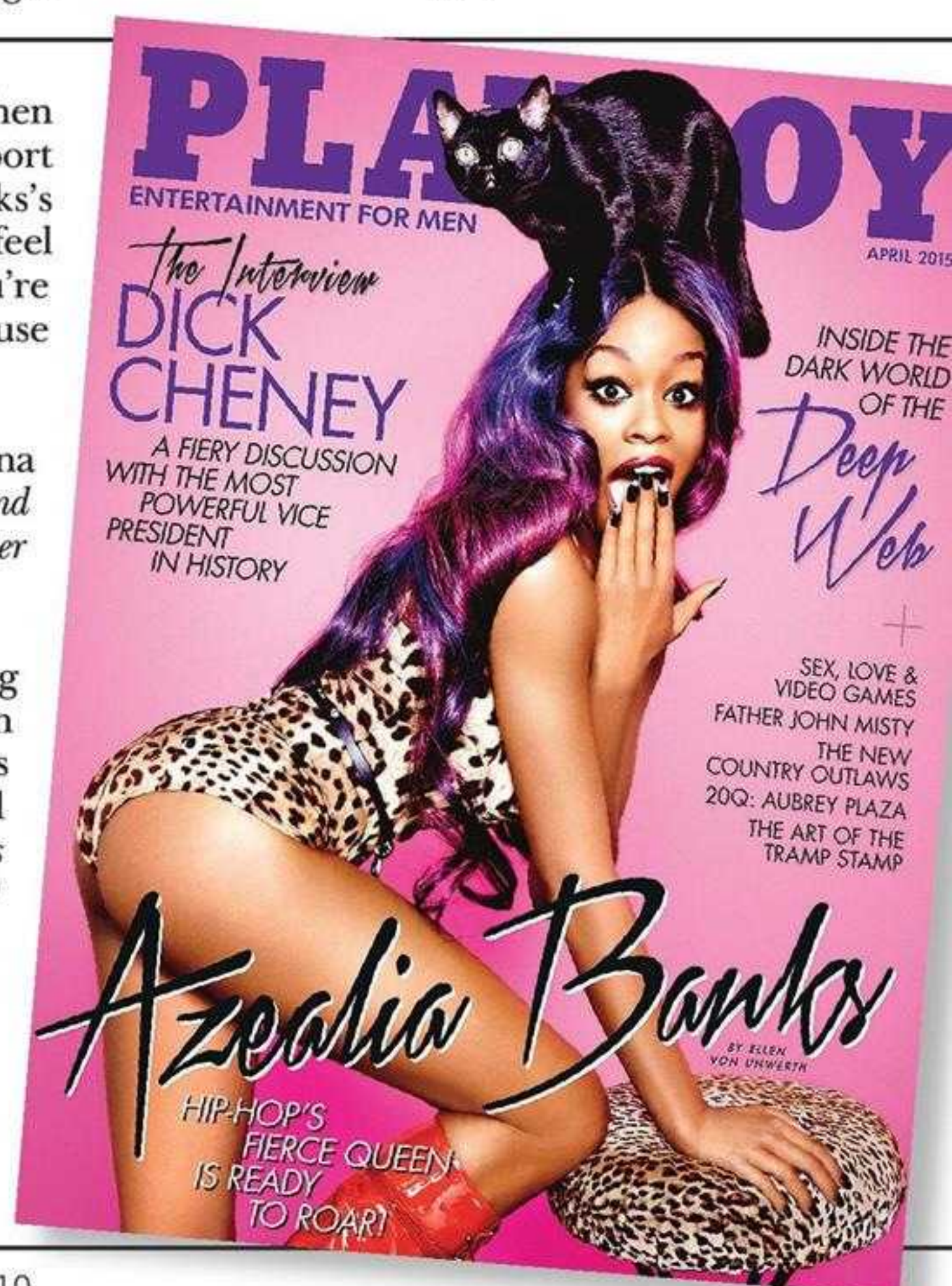
Banks's opinions are entirely her own, and we support her right to express them no matter how strongly we may disagree.

Were Ellen von Unwerth's amazing photos of Azealia Banks splashing in milk inspired by David LaChapelle's sensational image of Naomi Campbell in her PLAYBOY pictorial (*She Works Hard for the Money*, December 1999)? And are those two cats for real?

Freddy Walker

New York, New York

Posing in a milk bath was actually Banks's idea, as a play on the "chat noir" theme of the photo shoot. And yes, the two cats are real (and fabulous).



NOT JUST — ANY — ADVICE

FROM 2013 PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR
RAQUEL POMPLUN

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SUMMER OFFERS EVERY MAN A CHANCE AT REINVENTION.

LET RAQUEL BE YOUR GUIDE FOR MAKING SUMMER 2015 THE SUMMER YOU BECOME THE MAN YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE.

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Take a swim with a shark. Jump out of a plane. Talk to the hottest girl in the bar. Whatever it is, stare it down without being the one to blink.



2 BECOME ONE WITH NATURE

Leave the city behind and venture into the great outdoors to get in touch with your primitive side.



3 PUT DOWN YOUR AIR GUITAR AND PICK UP A REAL ONE

Whether you're into classic rock or EDM, you don't have to go to a festival to enjoy live music. Try a real instrument this summer and create your own playlist (covers are allowed).



4 GO OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Spend your summer vacation stepping out of your comfort zone and taking the road less traveled.



5 LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

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WARNING: This product contains nicotine derived from tobacco. Nicotine is an addictive chemical. (Photography by Francesco Carrozzini)

JUNE 2015

AFTER HOURS

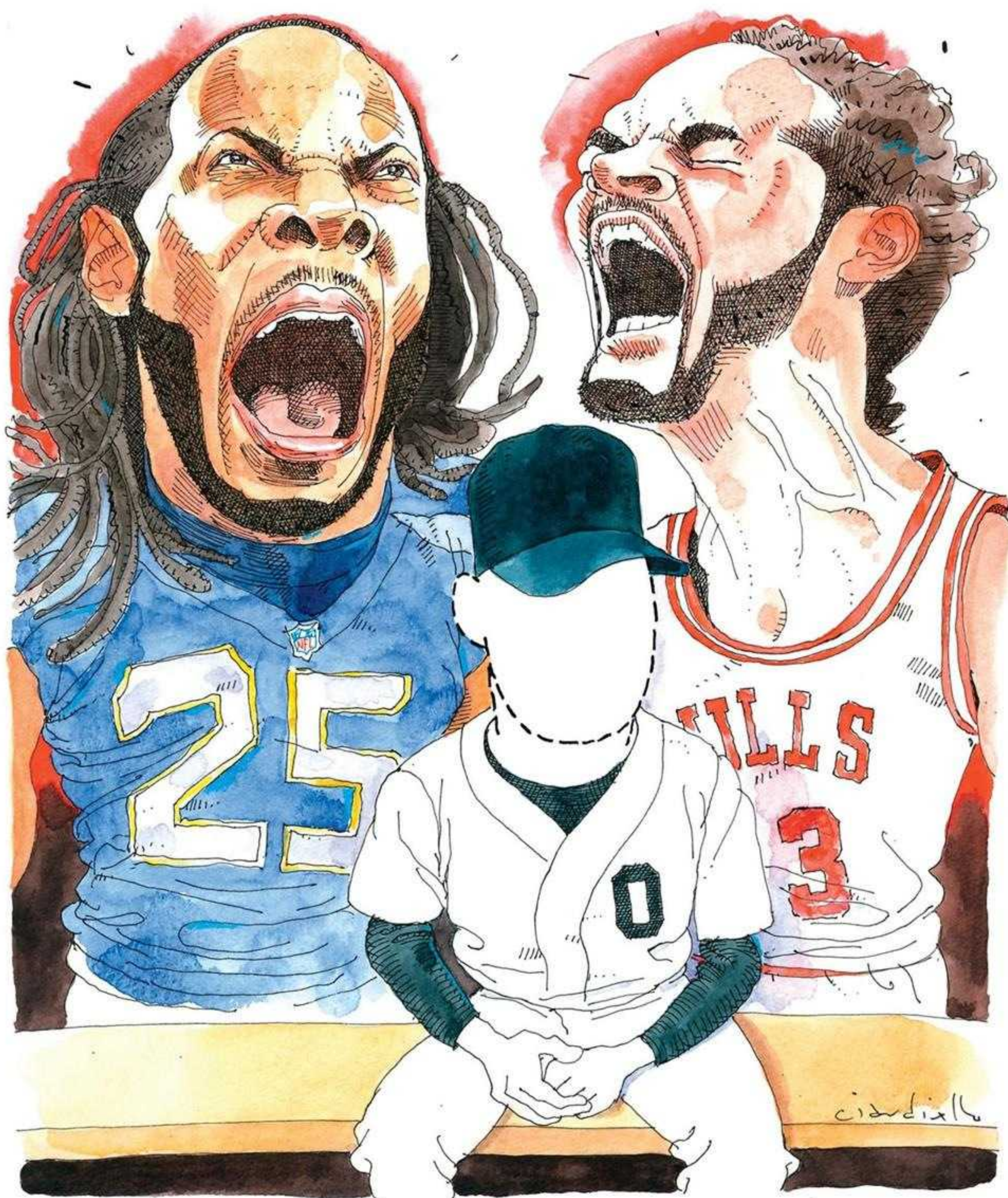
Photography by
JOSH REED

BECOMING ATTRACTION

Jessica Barth

→ "I CAN TAP into sex appeal, but I have an edge that people don't expect," says actress Jessica Barth. That edge is what makes the Philly native a scene-stealer in Seth MacFarlane's highly anticipated sequel *Ted 2*, in which she returns as the foulmouthed teddy bear's wife, raunchy humor in tow. "It's fun to play someone so outlandish," says Jessica of her character, who marries—and spoons—the animated plushie on screen. "Being funny has always come easy to me," she adds. "It's super hot to have a sense of humor." We wholeheartedly agree.

STYLING BY TAYLOR SHERIDAN; HAIR AND MAKEUP BY SARA CRANHAM; BANDEAU TOP BY YVES SAINT LAURENT



PERSONALITY CRISIS

MODERN BASEBALL HAS EVERYTHING GOING FOR IT, EXCEPT AN IDENTITY

Baseball is a bunch of thinking," a New Jersey 15-year-old told *The Washington Post's* Marc Fisher in April, "and I live a different lifestyle than baseball." This was in one of the "baseball is dying" articles that arrive every year around opening day and then again usually in October, even amid record revenue and attendance, unprecedented labor peace and billion-dollar television deals. This is a

very baseball thing—even in triumph, the sport can be counted on to worry aloud that it's too meditative, too smart, too good for this world.

But if the game cannot and should not mess with its beautiful, languorous essence, it's worth noting that baseball in 2015 is kind of boring—not because of its pace or aesthetics but because of its personality.

Because of how the game is shaped, baseball does not allow as much on-field expression as other sports. Watching

Russell Westbrook assault the basket or Marshawn Lynch vaporize a defensive back is thrilling because of the style and personality that animate the performance. Baseball players, by contrast, mostly do things the same way, out of necessity—there are only so many ways to throw a slider and even fewer ways to hit one.

And when Bryce Harper, the Washington Nationals' ultra-brash 22-year-old prodigy, experimented in spring training with luring base runners into testing his laser of an arm

through some strategic lollygagging, his manager quickly shut it down. Not because it didn't work—Harper threw the baited runner out—but because it's risky and because such things are just not done.

Baseball's unwritten rules are followed a lot more scrupulously than its written ones. These rules had a purpose back in the game's raggedy pre-history. "The early struggle of pro baseball was to transform itself from a place for rowdies and gamblers to something you could feel comfortable bringing the kids to," says baseball writer Steven Goldman. "It's amazing how much of the early ethos of the game was avoiding conflict through not embarrassing the other guy."

Generations on, baseball continues to police itself with grim, constipated zeal. If Yasiel Puig has the audacity to act impressed after doing something awesome, he'll be dodging fastballs and salty quotes from opponents. Mets closer Jenrry Mejia's elaborately choreographed victory celebrations drew priggish public criticism from his own manager.

There are other, practical reasons for baseball's personality deficit—more than a quarter of big leaguers speak English as a second language, and American-born MLB players are more likely to be white, well-to-do and from a handful of warm-weather states than before. If the various interchangeable white dudes of Major League Baseball all seem alike—an ocean of tall guys with beards—it's because they mostly are.

While baseball is currently without radicals like Dock Ellis—the cornrowed iconoclast who pitched a no-hitter while frying on acid back in 1970—there are exceptions to the scrupulously square rule. David Ortiz says and does whatever the hell he wants, and we're all richer for it; Dodgers pitcher Brandon McCarthy is as funny as anyone on Twitter; Puig's pound-for-pound swagger is unmatched in any sport. These are outliers, but they're a start, and a reminder that the sport could close the fun deficit if it wanted to. Baseball is not dying, which is good. It might as well live a little.—David Roth

MATCHMAKERS

YOUR SUMMER SEX LIFE STARTS WITH THE RIGHT APP. LET OUR GUIDE HOOK YOU UP

• Don't get caught with your pants down on the wrong app this summer. Techies have rolled out so many incarnations of digital dating that online profiles now beget different endgames based on the app they live in. Some deliver whips and chains; others, a ball and chain. To help, we've charted the most popular dating apps, considering preference, motive and mood. Your summer of love hereby commences.

LET'S GET SERIOUS

Ashley Madison

Cheaters gonna cheat. For spouses looking for extramarital sexy time.



Daddyhunt

Who's your daddy? Where younger gay men can find silver foxes who'll pick up the check.



Lulu

The Yelp of dating apps, where women rate and rant about the men who didn't pick up the check.



The League

This invite-only app for the elite has a waiting list thousands deep, for those seeking a truly "exclusive" relationship.



Tinder Plus

The granddad of dating apps now lets you undo swipe snafus and search for mates and dates around the world, for a small fee.



Match

Match is for personalities, not personas, so don't plan on hooking up without some serious face time.



Christian Mingle

Expect to BYOB on your first date (that's "bring your own Bible").



Grouper

It's all about safety in numbers with Grouper, which sets up trios of friends on group dates.

Bumble

To all the single ladies: This Tinder look-alike puts you in control so you can avoid those looking to just cop a feel.



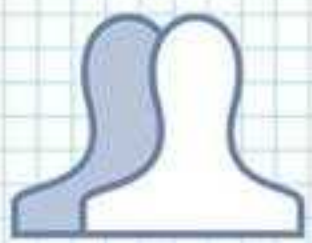
OkCupid

Compatibility scores, profile pictures, news feeds, personality questions, preference filters, instant messaging and then some. You know what they say: If you want a relationship, you have to work for it.



LIKE IT TRASHY

LIKE IT CLASSY



Down

Formerly known as Bang With Friends, until the makers realized nobody "bangs" anymore. This app filters through your Facebook friends list to find possible sex partners, because apparently life isn't awkward enough already.



Happn

Forget about the one who got away. This location tracker is essentially Missed Connections, so you can finally learn the name of that hottie you see on the subway every morning.



Bristlr

For bearded men and the women who love them.

Scruff

For bearded men and the men who love them.



Grindr

A directory of nearby headless, toned torsos looking for "workout" buddies.

Tastebuds

Takes "What kind of music do you like?" to the next level. Don't wait until the third date to find out she's *really* into Ed Sheeran.



I've got my eyes on you.
You're everything that I see.

Drizzy

"I can't get over you/You left your mark on me." This app uses Drake lyrics in texts to woo your next boo. Hey, it worked for Rihanna.



Hinge

Force your friends to introduce you to their hot friends. (We only hope you'd do the same.)



Her

Lesbi-honest, this is the best one for women seeking women.



CuddleBids

Are you a big spoon or a little spoon? Find a snuggle buddy with this app that matches those who want to cuddle and be cuddled.

LET'S HOOK UP



Q+A

NATASHA LYONNE

A CHEEKY CONVERSATION WITH OUR FAVORITE RAZOR-SHARP ACTRESS

• There's something about Natasha Lyonne that doesn't quite fit—and that's a good thing. She's an actress who could easily belong in a different era, with her Bette Davis eyes, Elaine Stritch rasp and Katharine Hepburn sass. After appearing in more than 50 films, the die-hard Manhattanite nabbed an Emmy nomination for her role as recovering heroin addict Nicky Nichols on Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black*, which returns this month. We love Nicky because she's a straight-talking dame in a 21st century package. For Lyonne, it's the perfect fit. —Nora O'Donnell

PLAYBOY: Nicky found herself in a precarious situation at the end of last season. Will there be consequences?

LYONNE: Shit really goes down this season. Every character has her own individual wormhole—an endless beast of psychological trauma. That's life!

PLAYBOY: You've been acting since you were six. Is there a role you haven't played?

LYONNE: In my personal life, I have so many dynamics with men, but I rarely play that on-screen. I'm usually the alpha character—a hero I wish I could be in real life. It's ironic, because so many actresses have the opposite problem.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about nude scenes?

LYONNE: I always felt like saving my tits for the right thing to come along, and it never happened. I would be more inclined to do a nude scene if it wasn't about sex, but I wish I had done it when they were perkier, because now it's going to be significantly less exciting. For anybody who sees them in a future as-yet-unknown project, I want them to think, Damn, I wish I had been seeing those tits for years! Maybe I can even push it back until I'm 40.

PLAYBOY: And in real life?

LYONNE: I'm usually topless making coffee, but other than sex and showering, I don't spend any time bottomless. When men wear T-shirts with no underwear, it's confusing. Follow my example: If I'm topless, then that's a good look for you too.

EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT SUPERHEROES IS WRONG

HERE'S WHY THAT MAKES IT EVEN BETTER

When writer Geoff Johns and artist Gary Frank approached the first volume of *Batman: Earth One*—their *New York Times* best-selling reboot of DC's iconic Dark Knight—they weren't afraid of the hand-wringing,

"Why have you ruined my life?" whining that seems to follow every superhero movie casting or teaser poster reveal. Because Johns understood a very basic maxim: "If it's great, it becomes canon."

With the sequel, *Batman: Earth One, Volume Two*, having recently hit shelves on a wave of anticipation, it seems their tinkering with Bruce Wayne's origin

story has met with more approval than outrage. It's proof that the reputation comic book fans have for reacting violently to change has been grossly exaggerated. Comic books survive on their ability to adapt and evolve, something particularly true with Batman. "We had a lot of conversations at the start about Bruce Wayne and Batman and what it was all about," says Johns. "And there were certain things we felt were immutable, the DNA of the character." But beyond that, both Johns and Frank agreed that Batman's elasticity over the years—from Adam West's pop-colored camp to Frank Miller's dark and bitter old Bruce to Christopher Nolan's stripped-down, real-world Gotham—actually gave them more freedom. "When it feels like everything has been done, it's kind of a liberation," says Frank. "The ground has already been broken, so you don't necessarily feel that you need to stay true to any one version."

In volume two we once again see Bruce Wayne finding his way as Batman, without iconic elements such as a Batmobile or even a Batcave. "If you're building an alternative Batman universe, there's a temptation to just tick off boxes and characters, and they feel shoehorned in," explains Frank. "We wanted genuine reasons for including them in the story." For Johns, each character's DNA needs to remain true, but the structure around that is fair game. "I think Batman is one of the most elastic fictional characters in history," says Johns. "He can be for five-year-olds or he can be for adults. It allows us creative freedom to explore this mythology." The term *mythology* is key, as Johns claims that big DC icons such as Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman have "god-like status." But at the end of the day, he admits, success or failure comes down to something distinctly human. "It's all about execution, man," Johns says. "When things succeed, they stick. If people rejected the Batmobile the first time out, it wouldn't have appeared again."

He adds, laughing, "Batman had a zebra costume once. You don't see that hanging in the Batcave, do you?"—*Eric Alt*

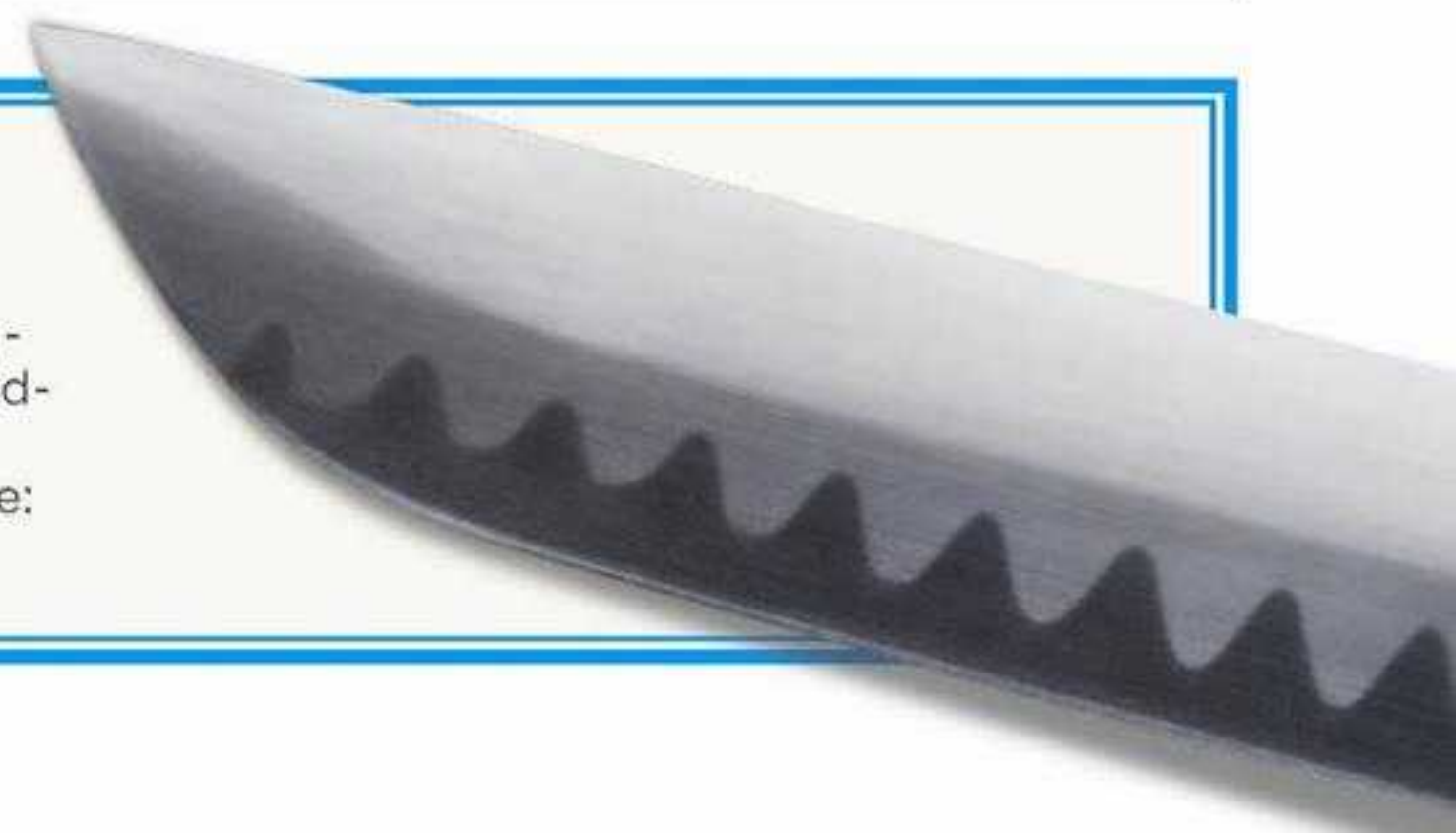


SHARPER IMAGE

► What does the Apple iPhone have in common with an 18th century Japanese sword? Marc Newson, the legendary designer

who joined Apple last year, recently collaborated with Japanese design studio WOW and a ninth-generation swordsmith to

create traditional Japanese swords. Ten sword-and-dagger sets were produced. Asking price: \$300,000.



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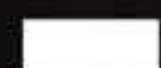
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GO NUTS

THERE'S MORE TO THE TRENDY TROPICAL INGREDIENT THAN COCONUT WATER

• While coconut water is a fine hangover treatment and a decent natural sports drink, let us not forget the other uses of this fruit that's trending in certain culinary subcultures. The paleos like it for its hunter-gatherer origins, and the Ayurvedic crowd touts its healing powers, but we love it for its versatile, umami-rich, fatty yum factor. Here are three satisfying ways to crack the coconut code that don't feel a bit like dieting.



THREE CRAZY-EASY COCONUT RECIPES

1

Szechuan Coconut Shrimp

► Combine ½ cup shredded coconut, ½ cup panko bread crumbs and 1 teaspoon ground Szechuan peppercorns in a bowl. In another bowl, beat two eggs. Dip shrimp in eggs, then in coconut mixture. In a medium pan, fry shrimp in ½ cup 375-degree vegetable oil until golden brown on each side.

2

Coconut Collins Cocktail

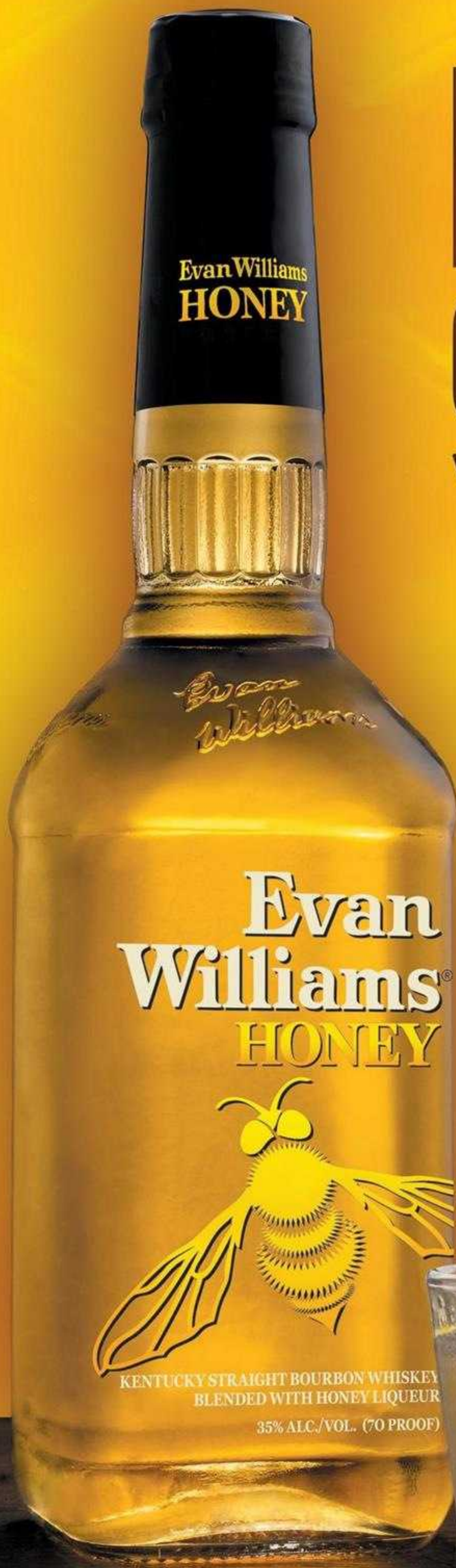
► In a tall glass filled with ice, combine 2 ounces gin, ½ ounce freshly squeezed lime juice, ½ ounce agave syrup (made with equal parts water and agave nectar) and 4 ounces raw coconut water. Top with sparkling water and garnish with lime wedge.

3

Coconut Rum Ice Cream

► Combine two 13-ounce cans full-fat coconut milk, 1½ cups sugar, 2 tablespoons dark rum and ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract in a blender. Pour into a large metal bowl and put in freezer. Whisk every 30 minutes until creamy and frozen.

HONEY OF THE YEAR.



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DOUBLE-SHOT THEORY

→ Who says a cocktail needs to be in a single glass? By downing a shot of something strong and then following it with a contrasting set of flavors, you can create a sort of multichapter cocktail that's greater than the sum of its parts.

CUT TO THE CHASER

A TOP BARTENDER DECONSTRUCTS DRINKING WITH SOPHISTICATED TWO-SHOT COCKTAILS

For several years the pickleback (a shot of whiskey chased by a shot of pickle juice) has dominated the bar world as the one-two punch drink to beat; it's a strong and savory shortcut to a boozy good time. To elevate this two-act structure to the next level, we tapped bartender Jim Meehan (whose drinks-recipe app PDT Cocktails is available in Apple's App Store) to create four complex two-shot cocktails worthy of the expert home bartender.



TOP SHOT

PICK YOUR POISON	1. TAKE A SHOT	2. CHASE THE SHOT	3. CHEW ON THIS
SANGRITA	1½ oz. blanco tequila	¾ oz. orange juice combined with ¾ oz. pomegranate juice	Lime wedge dusted with salt
BULL SHOT	1½ oz. vodka	1½ oz. room-temperature beef bouillon	Lemon wedge dusted with cayenne pepper
CHOCOLATE CANDY	1½ oz. gin	1½ oz. freshly squeezed raspberry juice	Square of dark chocolate (85 percent cacao)
ANTS ON A LOG	1½ oz. PX sherry	1½ oz. celery juice	Small piece of peanut brittle



FOLLOW THE BUNNY



/playboy



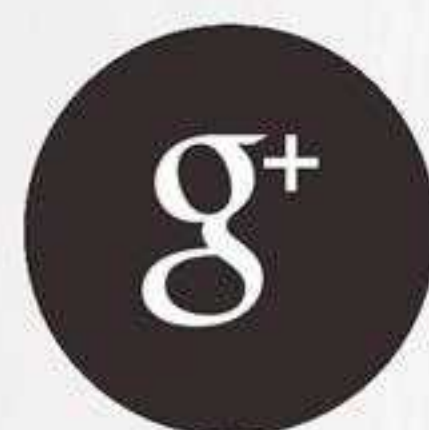
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STYLE



Made in the Shades

● N-Y-See

John Varvatos's New York store environs inspired his round-rim polarized Soho sunglasses.

• \$316, johnvarvatos.com

● Polar Flair

Break out the champagne-colored Garrett Leight Kinney frames with polarized tinted lenses.

• \$375, garrettleight.com

● Round About

Paul Smith pays tribute to the classic style of Lennon and Bowie with these rounded Wayden frames.

• \$285, paulsmith.co.uk

● Manly Oakley

When the convertible top is down, reach for Oakley's cool all-American Frogskins.

• \$110, oakley.com

● Touch of Gray

There's an echo of Raymond Chandler in Oliver Peoples's mirrored gray-fade Masek sunglasses.

• \$395, oliverpeoples.com

IN THE CLEAR

SUMMER'S BEST SUNGLASSES ARE A MATTER OF FULL TRANSPARENCY

• Geeky black sunglasses feel played out, so this summer look for something a little see-through. Crystal clear, pale amber or smoky gray, these transparent frames complement your mug rather than hide it. Just choose the best shape, which is usually the opposite of your features—rounded frames on a square face and vice versa. And blue- or green-tinted lenses harmonize easily with the gentle faded colors of the sunny season.—*Vincent Boucher*

Photography by JOSEPH SHIN



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NORTHERN SOUL

ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA'S STUNNING, ART-FILLED CITY, SWINGS HARDEST IN THE SUMMERTIME

It's 10 P.M., the sun is high, and a swirl of college kids sip champagne on the banks of the wide Neva River. Three fortunate dudes in button-downs and nearly a dozen Russian beauties in cocktail dresses, clinging and revealing in all the right places, rotate in and out of a series of group selfies, which they then beam up to a satellite and into the social-media universe. And why not? They're enjoying a perfect summer's day in the middle of the St. Petersburg night, and they take a mean picture.



Set Your Sites

➤ Just over the border from Finland, historic St. Petersburg is a UNESCO-certified jewel box of art, music and style. Summer is blessed with white nights and outdoor music festivals, and it's the ideal time to explore the knot

of gently arcing streets and 18th and 19th century apartment buildings with tarnished roofs that recall Montmartre. Sputnik Tours will get you onto the rooftops and inside the hidden courtyards you'd otherwise miss. It may be a touch Griswoldian, but you can also sightsee by canal if you hop on one of the many boat tours offered all over the old city.

Gawk This Way

➤ No matter which way you

cruise, you'll glimpse massive cathedrals hewn from stone and crowned with gold, including the colorful Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood and St. Isaac's Cathedral, which was built by 500,000 men and offers a rooftop colonnade with the best views in the city. In addition to touring the Hermitage, serious art fans should visit Erarta, an off-the-beaten-track, subversive modern art museum with an intriguing

permanent collection and creative rotating exhibits featuring Russian artists. Cold war and military buffs will appreciate the Central Naval Museum, where they

can view 300 years of Russian naval history, including the D-2 submarine *Narodovolets*, one of Russia's first diesel subs.

Room With a View

➤ The W St. Petersburg (1) makes a fine base. Rooms offer sleek lime-stone entries, high ceilings, rain showers and blackout curtains (a summer must). The eighth-floor terrace enjoys magnificent sunset views over the city, St. Isaac's and the Neva, and its in-house Mix res-

taurant, imagined by French celebrity chef Alain Ducasse, remains one of the best-reviewed spots in town. Or ditch the hotel and find one of the city's excellent Georgian kitchens, such as **Khochu Kharcho** (2), where the meat dishes are perfectly prepared and the Georgian wine is a wonderful surprise.

Rowdy, Partner

➤ The adventurous should hit the Dumskaya district after dinner. Sure, it's hard-drinking,

young and rowdy, and you should remain alert, but it's also gritty in the best way, can be friendly and is often the gateway to a long, spectacular night. Fidel (\$2 to \$6 cover charge), a crumbling relic that rings with Cuban tunes, is the top option, but there are worthy alternatives.

All That Jazz

➤ St. Petersburg loves its jazz, and the Hat is where impromptu jam sessions are the rule—except on Saturdays (weekends are for amateurs). It's a hip and sophisticated scene and a perfect second stop before you hit the clubs. On to **Dom Beat** (3), which lures the best DJs in Europe, for its dance parties under mirror balls and ladies sipping bubbly in stilettos.

—Adam Skolnick





SWISS + MADE



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RECON Leader Chronograph Alarm Series No. 8841 (kilometers) or 8842 (miles): 48mm, carbon reinforced polycarbonate case with stainless steel case back, World Time City Zones bezel, antireflective sapphire crystal, walking tachymetric scale, water resistant to 100 meters, PU watch strap has an inch/cm measurement (for use on maps) and comparison chart, and Luminox self-powered illumination. Swiss Made.

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CUTTING THE CORD

LET US CELEBRATE THE DEATH OF CABLE TV



BUILT TO SPILL

→ The two best things to happen to cell phones: big screens and metal casings. The **HTC One M9** (\$649 off contract) has both. Its five-inch HD display comes wrapped in a solid metal body built to withstand being tossed on the bar or fumbled to the floor. If you do manage to break the M9 in the first year, HTC will replace it. That full-metal jacket packs in a speedy processor, 20-megapixel camera and speakers with built-in Dolby audio. Bonus: an SD card slot to expand the phone's 32-gigabyte storage, something the Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy don't offer.



interface and a DVR that stores shows in the cloud, not on your PlayStation hard drive.

The most compelling reason to dump cable is HBO Now. The \$15 monthly service began as an Apple exclusive but is now offered by Sling TV and Cablevision, among others. HBO Now archives everything from *Game of Thrones* and *Boardwalk Empire* episodes to documentaries and other content.

Despite the many options, you can still encounter programming gaps. You probably won't see local news, though you might find it free online (check Livestream.com and LiveTV.Cafe.net). And while you can subscribe to MLB, NHL and NBA streaming packages for \$50 to \$130 per season, watching every local game won't be possible due to blackout restrictions, as often happens with cable. The biggest hang-up? The NFL, which offers a streaming package only to DirecTV subscribers and non-subscribers in limited markets.

Still, change is on the way. Eleven million households in the U.S. (roughly 13 percent) have only broadband internet and no cable-television subscription. Studies predict that in two years that will jump to 17 million. In five to 10 years, you can expect to cherry-pick anything you want to watch, from network shows to online hangouts with the stars. Cable won't be king. You will.—*Harold Goldberg*

► Why do I pay for awful stuff I never watch? Such has been the universal consumer lament since the dawn of cable TV. You want only ESPN but have to fork over extra cash for 16 home shopping channels. It will get worse. Studies show the average cable bill will climb to \$200 a month by 2020. The good news is that the old way of watching TV is over, gone the way of the VCR and the TV antenna. You can now drop your cable subscription and stream your favorite shows to a device—a game console, a laptop, even a mobile phone.

Cobbling together a plan to meet your viewing needs isn't too hard. For \$8 a month, Hulu Plus has a huge selection of major network shows. By fall, Apple will offer a 25-channel streaming package for \$40 a month, including CBS, Fox and ESPN, for use on all devices, including iPhones. Sling TV's "Best of Live TV" package

currently offers 20 networks for \$20 a month, including CNN, TNT, AMC and ESPN, with additional channels available in bundles, such as "Sports Extra" (ESPN News, ESPN U, etc.) or "Hollywood Extra" (EPIX, Sundance, etc.), for \$5 more. Sony's

THE OLD WAY OF WATCHING TV IS OVER, GONE THE WAY OF THE VCR AND THE TV ANTENNA.

PlayStation Vue offers the most channels: 50 for \$50, including TNT, NBC and AMC (albeit without ABC and ESPN). Vue is available only on PlayStation and the price is comparable to that of a basic-cable bill, but it includes a customizable



GET OUTTA TOWN!

LAND ROVER INSTRUCTOR BOB BURNS'S FAVORITE OFF-ROAD SPOTS

Sierra Nevada

→ "The Western mountains have incredibly beautiful, remote areas, including standard destinations such as the Rubicon and Fordyce Creek trails."

The Southwest

→ "From Moab to Grand Staircase, the Southwest has such variety in untouched terrain. You get a great feeling of isolation here. Use the Four Corners as a starting point."

Anywhere, Colorado

→ "There are really no bad areas for off-roading in the entire state of Colorado. And it's rich in American history."

LOW-DOWN AND DIRTY

SMALL SUVs TAKE OFF-ROADING TO UNEXPLORED TERRITORY

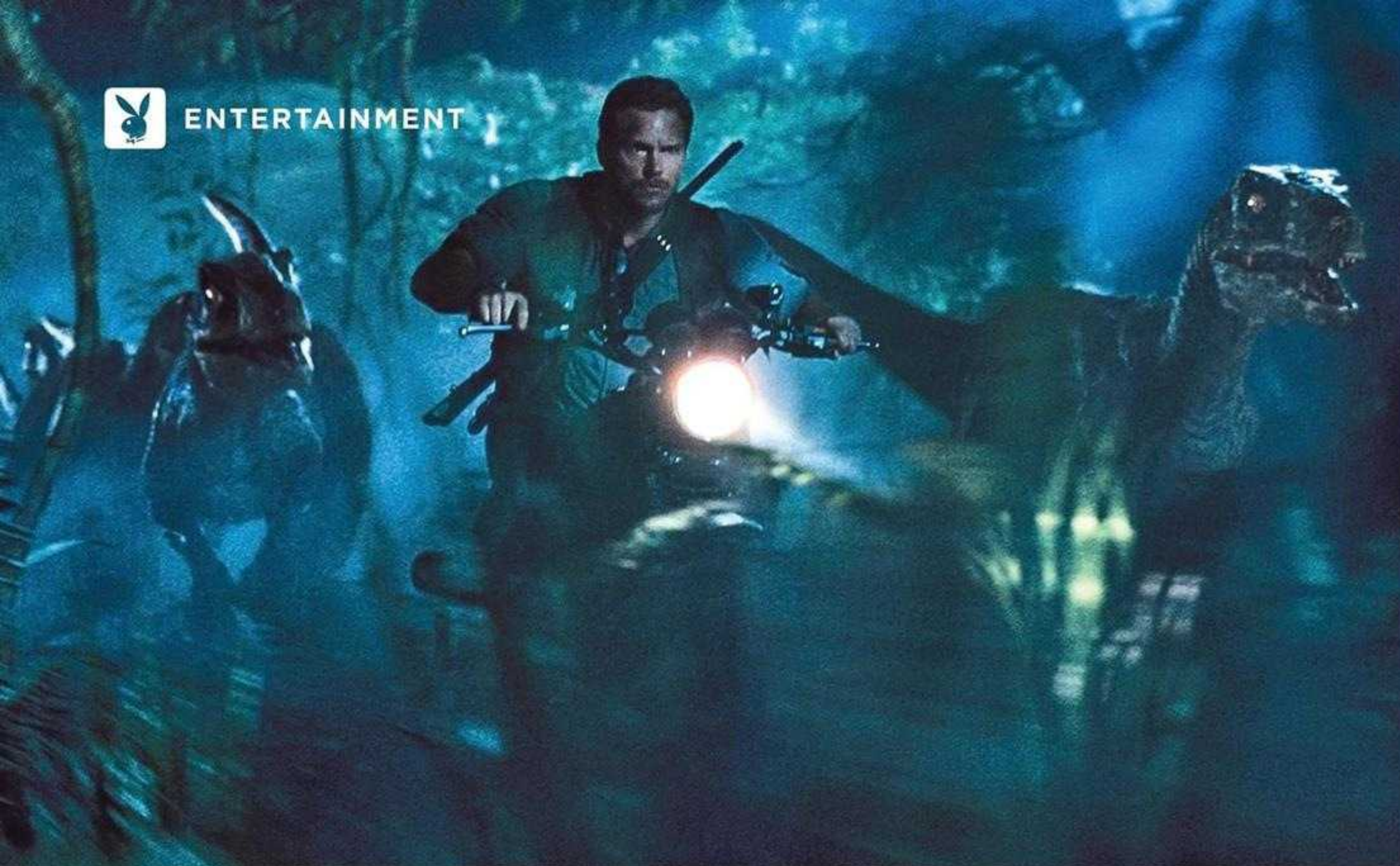
• Off-roading is as much about brains as about brute strength, and the latest move in SUVs proves it. The **Land Rover Discovery Sport** (base price: \$37,070) is a compact SUV that uses a punchy, turbocharged in-line four and the company's time-proven Terrain Response system to make mincemeat of mud and rock. We drove one through a raging Icelandic creek to test the truck's claimed wading depth

of 23.6 inches. The Discovery Sport can even accommodate seven thanks to an optional 5+2 flexible seating system that, when laid flat, delivers a load floor as long as that of a Range Rover. The new **Jeep Renegade** (base price: \$18,990) is a budget-friendly little hauler with personality. Though not as rugged as the battle-ready Jeep Wrangler, the Renegade is surprisingly tough, especially in Trailhawk trim,

which includes eight inches of ground clearance and 19 inches of water fording. The Renegade manages decent gas mileage, pulling 24 mpg from the 2.4-liter engine (though four-wheel drive may test that), while the interior is a rolling tribute to off-roading, down to the map of Moab in the center storage bin. Its size and power are built to tough it out in tight spaces.

—William K. Gock





MOVIE OF THE MONTH

JURASSIC WORLD

By Stephen Rebello

• A genetically spliced superdinosaur is stomping terrified tourists in a prehistoric safari theme park, and it turns out the creature is ferocious, calculating and crazy in the head. Welcome to *Jurassic World*, Hollywood's third try at recapturing the adrenaline rush and sense of adventure that made 1993's Steven Spielberg-directed *Jurassic Park* iconic. "The trailers make it seem like a relentless thrill ride of violence and insanity," says director and co-screenwriter Colin Trevorrow of the sequel, which stars Chris

Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard, Judy Greer and Vincent D'Onofrio. "It is, but our goals were to get beyond just people running from dinosaurs. We made a rule that no animal would do anything that animals on this planet can't do today. We've found ways to respect the characters from the earlier films, so the T. rex has lots to do that will make fans and newcomers excited. As far as the human characters, if you don't like them, you don't care if they get eaten. We've added elements of sexual tension and borrowed a page from Hollywood screwball comedies. I had Chris Pratt—who's endearingly funny and such a badass with a gun that you know he will fuck up a dinosaur if he has to—watch screwball and adventure movies like *The African Queen* and *Romancing the Stone*. We haven't sneak-previewed the movie, so it's a thrill knowing I'll be seeing it fresh with an audience. I want people to rip the seats out of the theaters and burn them in the streets."

TEASE
FRAMEMORENA
BACCARIN

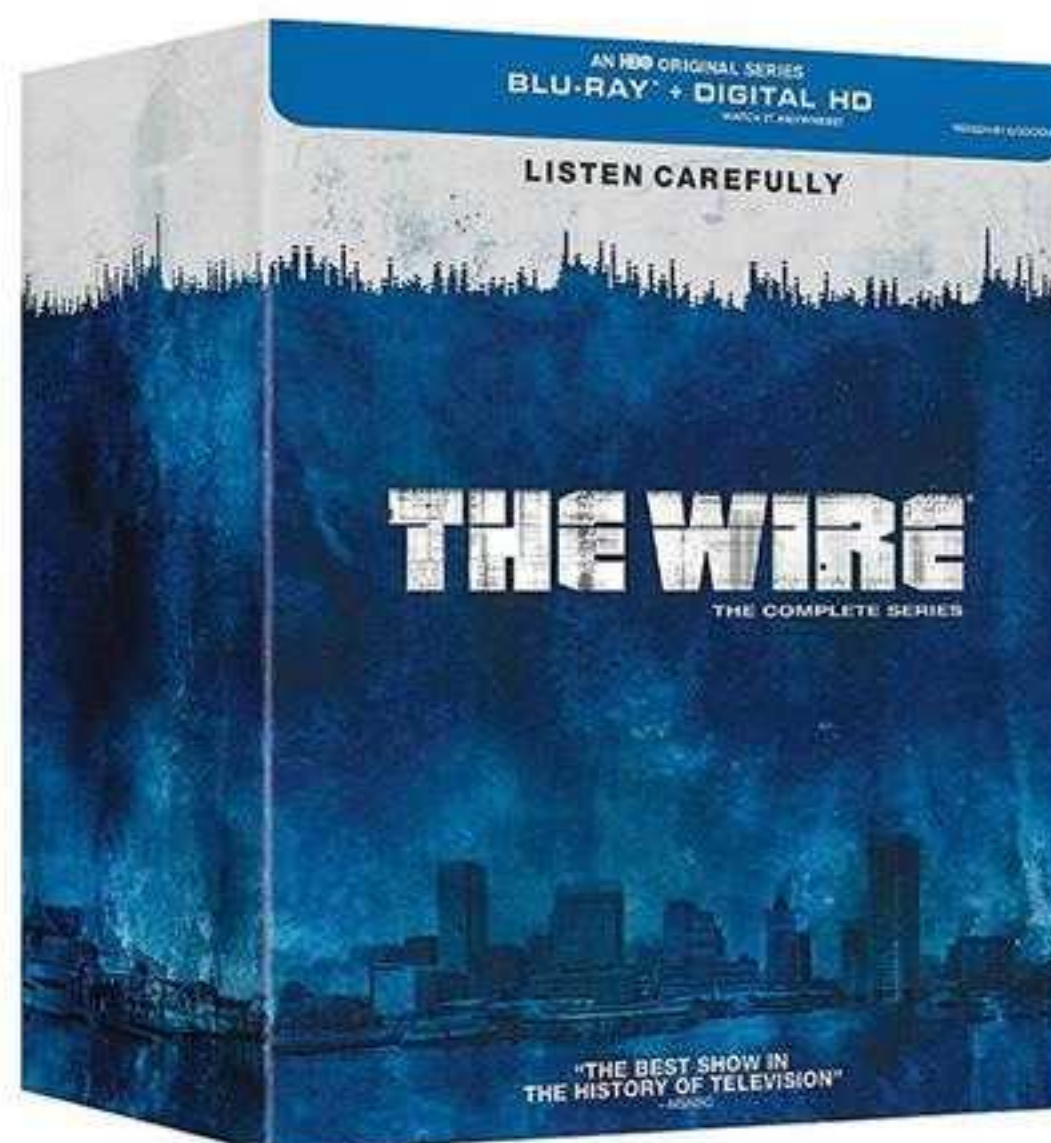
→ Sizzling Brazilian American actress Morena Baccarin earned an Emmy nomination for her role on Showtime's *Homeland* (pictured) and has a recurring role on *Gotham*. Catch her next on the big screen in the action comedy *Spy*.

IN YOUR LIVING ROOM

THE WIRE: THE COMPLETE SERIES

By Greg Fagan

• *The Wire* concluded its five-season run on HBO in 2008 with just a handful of awards but with critical acclaim almost cultish in its fervor. This Blu-ray box invites newbies and devotees alike to plunge into series creator David Simon's mesmerizing depiction of Baltimore, a city struggling under the overlapping dysfunctions of its institutions. Originally broadcast in the 4:3 aspect ratio, the 60-episode show feels more appropriately filmic in this HD debut after being remastered into 16:9 widescreen. (Digital HD) **Best extra:** a panel discussion from last year that includes Simon and about a dozen cast members. ★★★★★



ENTOURAGE

Jeremy Piven
returns as volatile
superagent Ari
Gold in the movie



Q: Was it tough to switch back into Ari Gold mode?

A: You just lock into those qualities, which are the antithesis of my own qualities—his quick-twitch reactive temper, his overly emotional investment and his complete focus on money and getting there by any means necessary. I was lucky enough to play him for eight seasons, and there are a lot of good examples of Ari Gold around.

Q: Are you tight with co-stars Adrian Grenier, Kevin Dillon, Kevin Connolly and Jerry Ferrara off camera?

A: I'm gone seven months out of the year doing my show *Mr. Selfridge* in England. I'm out of the loop with American culture and sometimes with relationships. I haven't seen a lot of the guys, but it was great to be back with them.

Q: How do you think the *Entourage* movie will play to people who haven't watched the show?

A: It's great to take a ride with the boys again. The movie is about Hollywood, but it's also about loyalty and friendship. I hope people laugh and want to spend time with their own friends after seeing it.—S.R.



MUSIC

WHY MAKE SENSE?

By Rob Tannenbaum

• The short one, the chubby one, the ginger, the one with glasses and the other one: Even those of us who love Hot Chip can't find a sexy way to describe the British electropop quintet. On *Why Make Sense?*, the group's sixth and best album, they continue to meld synth-fired New Wave with R&B tenderness and crowd-pleasing dance music. "Huarache Lights" celebrates a DJ's power to make a festival crowd "bathe in the light" but mocks it as well—this is the least booming club music you'll ever hear. Hot Chip replaces volume with inventive touches that make its music both contemplative and extroverted. Maybe one day we'll learn their names. 🐢🐢🐢



TELEVISION

AQUARIUS

By Josef Adalian

• Charles Manson may be 80, but Hollywood's fascination with him remains strong. *Aquarius*, the latest attempt to find entertainment value in California inmate B33920, thankfully doesn't make Manson its chief star. Instead, it's the story of Sergeant Sam Hodiak (David Duchovny), a 40-ish (and fictional) homicide detective trying to help an ex-flame after her teenage daughter goes missing. Since it's 1967 Los Angeles, we immediately guess what has happened to

the girl: She's fallen under the spell of young Charlie. Hodiak's mission, with the help of a younger undercover cop spying on the dangerous hippies, will be to find her before she joins the Family for good. Introducing this made-up story into the Manson mythology is cheesy, but it at least brings some tension to what has become a very familiar tale. There's also a ton of period music (and incessant pot smoking) for anyone looking to take a summer nostalgia trip. 🐢½

LISTEN HERE!

BANDITOS' TOP FIVE ESSENTIAL SONGS

COREY PARSONS, LEAD SINGER OF SOUTHERN-ROCK UPSTARTS BANDITOS, PICKS HIS FAVORITE AMERICAN CLASSICS

RANDY NEWMAN
"Political Science"

"A satirical look at how our government handles foreign policy. His solution is to drop the atomic bomb, except on Australia."

BLAZE FOLEY
"Big Cheeseburgers and Good French Fries"
"A happy-go-lucky summertime song by a strange, neurotic dude who didn't get any attention until after he died—which is a classic American story."

IGGY AND THE STOOGES

"Search and Destroy"
"A streamlined rock-and-roll song that describes coming of age and the angst of being 21 or 22."

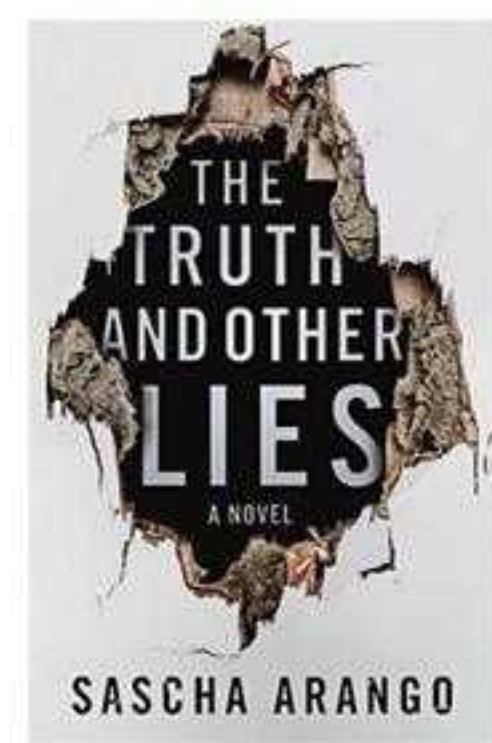
NEIL YOUNG
"Unknown Legend"
"Yeah, I know he's from Canada. It's about a lady in a small town who lives a double life and rides a Harley."

PAUL SIMON
"American Tune"
"It sends shivers down your spine. It's about people who've tried and failed and still get up and try again."

BOOKS

THE TRUTH AND OTHER LIES

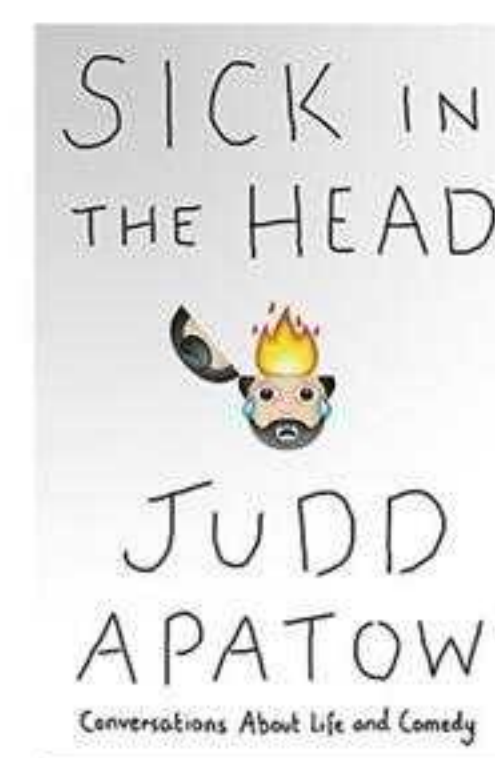
By Cat Auer



• Do we ever truly know anyone? In Sascha Arango's excellent psychological thriller, Henry Hayden is a best-selling author who hasn't written a single word, a devoted husband who cheats, a lover

who hates his mistress and a bully who saves his victim. Among his many secrets is that his wife, Martha, writes his books. Yet storytelling—or, rather, lying—is essential to his manipulative character. And oh what a tangled web he weaves after Martha disappears under questionable circumstances, a situation that threatens him with exposure. To what gruesome lengths will he go to protect himself? Arango, who has penned episodes of *Tatort* ("Crime Scene"), a long-running detective procedural in Germany, maintains the perfect pace to keep you hooked in this riveting, bleakly existential novel. 🐢½

SICK IN THE HEAD

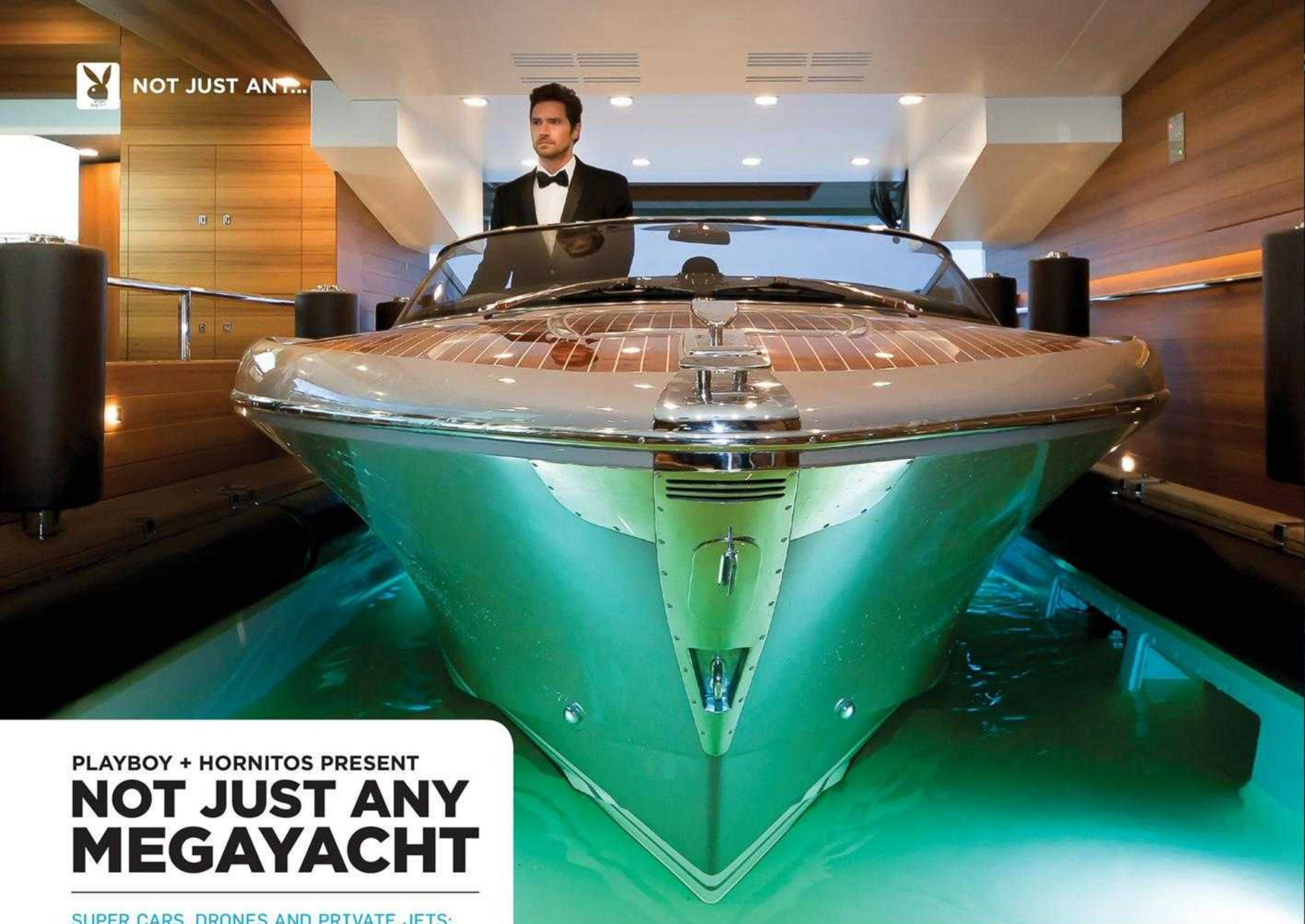


• To get good at something, start young and dream big. Before writer-director Judd Apatow conquered Hollywood, he was a 15-year-old kid hungry for a life in comedy. He

finagled interviews with stand-ups he admired (Leno, Shandling, Seinfeld), pumping them on how to develop jokes, get booked, handle hecklers. Eight of these early "conversations about life and comedy" from 1983 and 1984 form the beating heart of Apatow's book, along with 30 more recent ones starting in 2005. There's something sweet yet canny about a kid asking Martin Short to explain SCTV. Apatow learned well; he spent the book's 20-year gap putting the lessons into practice. The more recent interviews (highlights: Harold Ramis, Roseanne Barr, Spike Jonze) are shot through with shoptalk and insider anecdotes. If Apatow's gift for comedy is a sickness, may he never be cured. 🐢½



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GLIDE RIGHT IN

→ In an industry that's naturally extravagant, **J'ade** kicks it up a notch. The yacht features a hydraulic-operated hatch that functions as a drive-in garage for personal speedboats—meaning guests can actually drive their speedboats right into the ship. Oh, and the space doubles as an indoor ocean pool when it's not being used for storage. No big deal.



BRONZE BEAUTY

→ Designed without a specific client in mind, **The Belafonte** is making waves with potential buyers. The ship boasts five cabins and an owner's suite that spans 84 square feet, it's the outside that makes a stunning first impression. Along with mahogany rails and stainless steel detailing, the yacht's retro bronze exterior makes it an instant standout in the water.



BATTLESHIP

→ **The Azzam** has held the title of the longest megayacht since July 2013, but perhaps the most exciting feature of the megayacht is its rumored interior and high technology. Owned by the president of the United Arab Emirates, The Azzam is said to be equipped with a bulletproof master suite and missile defense. Because you never know what you may encounter on the high seas.



INSIDE SURPRISE

→ You may not be able to tell from its clean white exterior, but the inside of the **Dubai** is infused with bold colors, intricate design and detailed mosaics. The main attraction of the ship's stunning interior is the dramatic circular staircase with glass steps that change color and allow for a visually exciting stroll between the social area and the yacht's seven decks.



MIAMI NICE

A MEMBERS-ONLY SERVICE GIVES YOU ACCESS TO CREATE YOUR OWN PLAYBOY PARADISE

→ Bottle service at nightclubs is so last year. Spearheading the latest trend of chartering yachts, the new website YachtLife.club allows you to party on your own luxury yacht for the day in Miami. #YachtLife members are guaranteed yachts on demand.

PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR,
MEET TEQUILA OF THE YEAR.



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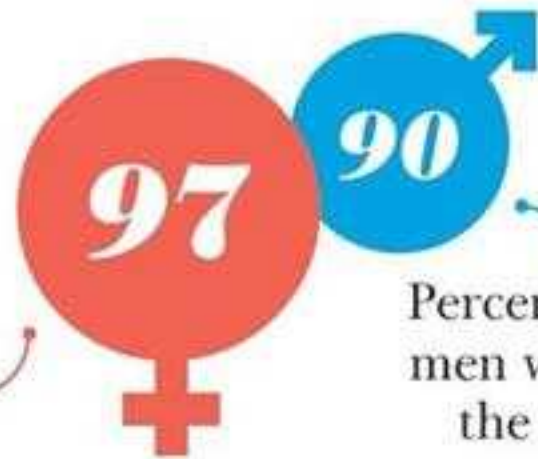


CRUEL and UNUSUAL

The first treadmill, invented in 1818, was designed to be used in prisons as a "correctional tool" to punish inmates.

LAUGH IT UP

Percentage of women who feel a good sense of humor is just as important in a mate as physical attractiveness



Percentage of men who feel the same

Approximate number of people South Korea had jailed since 1985 for cheating on their spouses. The 62-year-old law criminalizing adultery was repealed this year.

25,000

JUST A KISS

A Time Out survey of 11,000 people revealed the percentage of dates that end with:

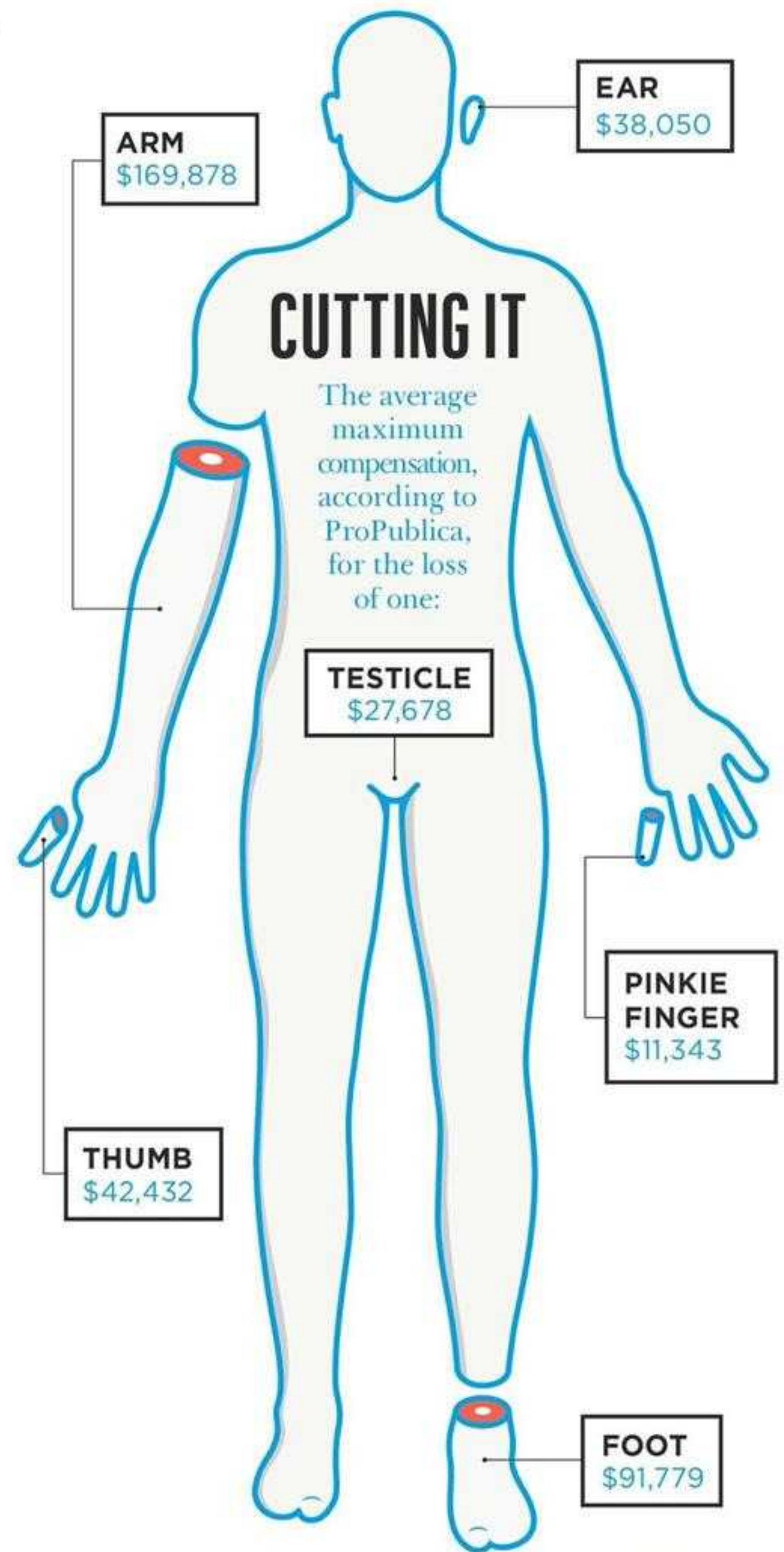
A KISS
53%

PLANS FOR A SECOND DATE
40%

DISAPPOINTMENT
28%

AN AWKWARD GOOD-BYE
21%

NUDITY
20%



LADIES FIRST

The top five women artists streamed by American men on Spotify:



PAYING FOR IT

Thanks in part to stricter regulations, the legal brothel industry in Australia is expected to grow to more than \$180 million by 2019, according to analysts at IBISWorld.

WIMBLEDON by the NUMBERS

54,250
Number of tennis balls used during the Wimbledon Championships

290 million
Number of tennis balls it would take to fill Centre Court (with the roof closed)

60 minutes
Time that Rufus, a Harris hawk, spends flying the grounds to deter pigeons on most competition mornings



10,000

Number of copies of the Seth Rogen movie *The Interview* dropped on North Korea via balloon by South Korean activists.

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HOTEL, MOTEL, HOLIDAY INN...

WHAT IS IT ABOUT A HOTEL ROOM THAT MAKES THE WOMAN IN YOUR LIFE GO WILD?

For years I stupidly didn't care which hotels I stayed in. Some were called residences, some invoked holidays, many had a number in their name for reasons that made me assume their first attempts at running a motel had failed. But I didn't understand why anyone would pay a lot of money for a place where you spend the vast majority of your time unconscious. This is why they do not make rococo boxing rings.

I had a friend who would—for his live-in girlfriend's birthday or their anniversary—book a hotel room in the same city they lived in. Which is clearly insane. I couldn't figure out why his girlfriend liked this. "Hey, for your present, I'm taking you on vacation—down the street!" That's like buying her a piece of jewelry she already has and making her pack a suitcase to get it.

Then, when I had to book a hotel through a magazine's travel department and they suggested the Mondrian, an expensive place in Los Angeles, I took it, since I was traveling with a girlfriend I wanted to impress and I was a magazine writer, which doesn't impress anyone. The huge lobby, the employees constantly saying hi—all of it did nothing for me. But interestingly it made her want to have sex. I don't think it even mattered that the sex was with me; I think she just wanted to have sex inside that hotel room. If I had understood all of this earlier, not only would I have booked way nicer hotels, but I would have gone to Cornell's hotel school.

I've since learned that when a woman walks into a hotel room she immedi-

ately starts to think about sex, whereas I think about sex no matter where I am. I'm thinking it's a good time to have sex when we're hiking in a forest. When we're in a car. When we're at a place with a one-person bathroom. When we're at a place with a bathroom for a whole lot of people but it has stalls with doors on them. Basically anytime we're in a room and our biological parents are not.

Women think about sex in a hotel room because it's the one place they don't have to stress about stuff. Dinner? Not their responsibility. The pile of laundry that has to be cleaned? There isn't one. But there's about to be. You can say lame stuff like that in a hotel room and *still* have sex.

There's no stack of bills, no stack of dishes in the sink, no stack of magazines they're supposed to read. In other words, when the worries of the world are removed, women think just like men. Or the logical contrapositive: Men's minds are always empty.

The hotel's pay-per-view television still has porn, which seems to make no sense in this age of wi-fi. It's there because women will playfully suggest watching porn in a hotel room even if you can never coax them into doing that at home. Because on a hotel TV—for 15 discreetly billed dollars (approximately infinity higher than the cost of far superior porn online)—porn is classy. This super nice hotel, after all, has sanctioned it. This is rich-people porn. Porn in which men might ask permission before they come on your face.

I would have imagined all this to be even truer in a crappy motel room, which is a place where you don't have to think about anything, and when you do think about something it's really, really

dirty. In fact, I have no idea what people do in cheap motel rooms besides have sex. Maybe drugs. But they probably have sex after the drugs.

But in a bad motel women are right back to worrying about things—specifically, the kind of things that happen in bad motels. Bedbugs, dirty bathrooms. Even women who fantasize about bad things happening to them want to act those things out only in a really nice hotel room.

The reason men cheat when they're away at conferences isn't that they know they won't get caught. They would cheat anyway. It's that conferences are the only time women are attracted to them. Because the women at conferences have hotel rooms. And for them, not using a hotel room for sex is like showing up at happy hour and not eating the chicken wings is for us. The point is: Women will have sex with you in a hotel even if you're married and just ate chicken wings.

I clearly don't know how women think, but I do know they think. All the time. And if you can find something to turn off all that thinking for 12 to 18 minutes, it's worth the money. It's why there are spas, yoga studios, serotonin inhibitors and fashion magazines. And nice hotel rooms. If a hotel room comes with a glass of wine when you walk in and has a robe in the bathroom, make a reservation.

And you can do this anytime. You barely need an excuse. "Oh, I think I might drink a lot at dinner, so let's get a hotel nearby" works. She won't mention Uber. She won't question all the times you drank a lot and didn't suggest getting a room. Because she'll already be thinking about sex. And some other stuff. But once she gets to the hotel, she'll forget all about the other stuff. ■

BY
JOEL
STEIN



MELODY NEWCOMB

ABOUT THAT NIGHT

NOTHING IS MORE AWKWARD THAN RUNNING INTO THAT GUY YOU SLEPT WITH ONCE

I've always appreciated getting a heads-up from the host of a party if someone I've been intimate with is also invited—the “FYI, someone you slept with is going to be at my party” message. You don't want to get caught with a Fritos Scoop full of seven-layer dip in your hand when someone who has seen you naked walks up with a hot, Scoop-less date. Running into a real ex is a whole other thing, but for me, running into the one-night/one-week stand has always been more embarrassing. Until recently I didn't totally understand why.

I once hooked up with a guy who was just out of a relationship, as was I, and we both agreed to one fun night with no follow-up e-mails or calls or dates or obligations. Just a one-off. A *fun-off*. (Just an aside, a name-drop without the name: The guy became super famous a short while later.) We made out in a bar. On the street in front of the bar. On the curb in the residential neighborhood surrounding the bar, when the bouncer made it clear he didn't have the same enthusiasm for us that we had for each other. The guy's friend eventually dropped us off at my place. It didn't take long for him to “tour” my junior one-bedroom and meet my two cats. It was clear he was not a cat person. I would usually keep the cats out of the bedroom, but this was a one-night-only thing and the cats were not, so they stayed. We had a good time, but we were pretty drunk. It was neither of our best work, but I would stand by it in court. “He did this. Then I did that. It all worked together. It was a fun-off!” I think the jury would rule it was an average hookup and that we both had nothing to be embarrassed about. So when the alcohol went from giving us energy to making us dead tired, we gave in. We celebrated a job well-enough done by snuggling up to each other, strangers, on my queen-size pillow-top.

His body wrapped around mine. Legs touching. Arms touching. Faces touching. Strangers just hours earlier now with touching faces! Two slumbering strangers

totally and completely vulnerable. I sleep in the fetal position. He assumed the big spoon. I have a little whistle in my nose that I'm self-conscious about. He snored lightly and bit his fingernails. That hopefully made us even. I stared at his face while he slept. (I'm aware that sounds creepy.) That's something else, looking at a person's sleeping face. Seeing their wrinkles fade away as their muscles relax. Feeling the tension of life leave their body for a few hours. Feeling their toe hair. And those rogue hairs on their neck that don't even know what kind of hairs they are. You spend more time cuddled up with a person post-hookup than you do actually hooking up. Which is why, I realized, I was embarrassed when I ran into this now famous guy. We'd been more than “intimate with each other”; we'd been *intimate* with each other. Sleeping together was more intimate than “sleeping together.” I drooled. I freaking drooled!

I'm not embarrassed about the sex. Or that he's seen me naked. I thought I was, but I'm embarrassed that he knows my nose whistles. I'm embarrassed that we held each other. That I stared at him sleeping. That we slept intertwined for a long time (minus the few minutes I left to quietly fart into towels—I'm very ladylike). But why? Why is that type of intimacy embarrassing and sex is not? I guess because we're kind of less vulnerable during sex, when our animal instincts take over. It's afterward that we're back to being regular humans who bite their nails and put down shower curtains

in the hallway every night because their cats pee on the carpet.

I've hooked up with a lot of guys, and I don't really remember the hooking up, but I do remember intimate things about them. A tattoo of a dragon that had faded and bled into a fat snake. A tan line that revealed the dude was the owner of some kind of European-cut swimsuit. And I remember things from their bedrooms: posters of bands that once defined them (Rush), books they aspired to read on the floor (*Crime and Punishment*) and books they'd actually read (*Gone Girl*, a sort of *Crime and Punishment* light). Souvenirs from the life they'd lived (a college diploma). And evidence of the life they wanted: a book on screenwriting, a new guitar, a travel guide to Argentina from 10 years earlier. And then there are our bedrooms and what they remember about us: our one-night stands, nose whistles, regrettable tattoos and empty

Tylenol PM bottles. The *Brides* magazine on the nightstand, clearly not being read by any soon-to-be bride. They take these mental Polaroids of us, as we do of them.

But maybe it's not so embarrassing. Maybe that real intimacy is weirdly beautiful, your body *and* your life lazily intertwined with a stranger for the night. Just two humans being human. So next time you're at a friend's party and you run into a girl holding a Fritos Scoop who you know from personal experience drools and sneaks off to fart into towels in the middle of the night, be kind—and maybe she won't tell anyone you like to be the little spoon. ■

BY
HILARY
WINSTON



TONY HUYNH



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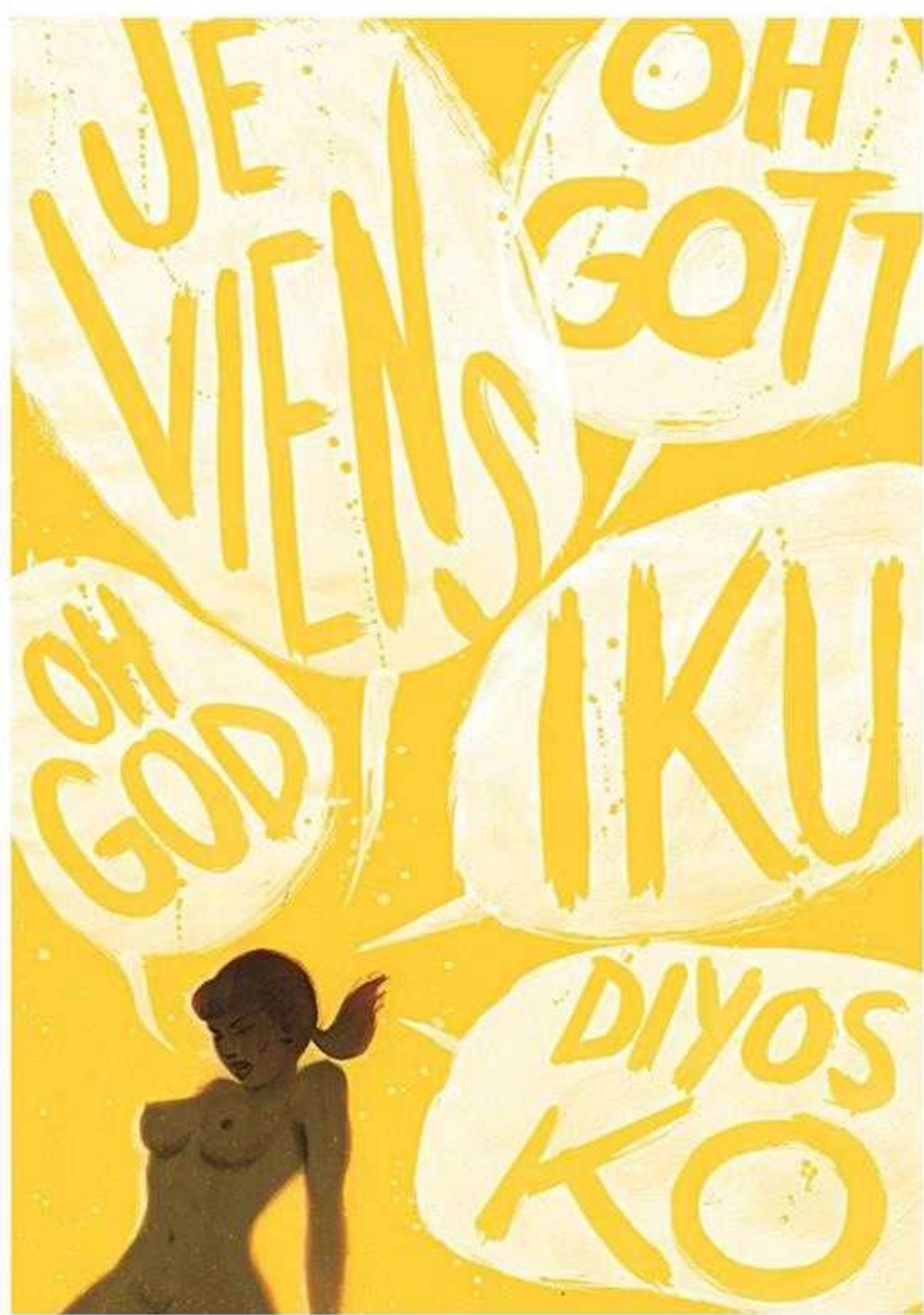
I am a very sexual individual with a wonderful wife of more than 20 years. She has given me countless phenomenal blow jobs; if we could bottle and sell her technique, we would be millionaires. In addition to the incredible oral sex I get several times a week, we still regularly have intercourse—just not early in the day. I have never been able to convince her to experiment with morning sex, even though I always have enormous morning wood. How do I get her excited about sex in the A.M.?—J.G., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Have you tried brushing your teeth first?

I got my one and only tattoo in 1980, immediately after I'd completed basic training. A year later I grew unhappy with the tattoo and tried to get rid of it with a DIY remover; it was painful and made a mess of the design. Then, a few years after that, I went to a doctor for dermabrasion treatment. The process was excruciating, but it succeeded in removing 95 percent of the ink—along with some skin pigmentation. Despite my unpleasant and painful experiences, I'm contemplating getting another tattoo. But this time I want to know in advance about my removal options. What is state-of-the-art tattoo removal like today? Have things changed in the past three decades?—D.G., Houston, Texas

Tattoo-removal technology has advanced since your last brutal brush with dermabrasion, but a tattoo is still not an easy thing to undo. It remains painful and complicated, no matter the process. Dermabrasion was the quickest route to removal, but it frequently had the unfortunate side effect of leaving a scar, which is why that process has fallen out of favor. Laser removal is now the most commonly performed procedure, but it can be costly and take upward of 10 visits to completely remove the ink, depending on the size and complexity of the tattoo. Removing a tattoo with multiple colors may require various laser types, because not all lasers are capable of destroying all pigments. (If you really want to nerd out, the only acceptable types of lasers for tattoo removal are Q-switched lasers in ruby, alexandrite or Nd:YAG, each one doing a better job than the other at destroying certain pigments. The more colorful and complicated the tattoo, the more laser types will be involved in its removal.) If you're not willing to commit

PLAYBOY ADVISOR



I was raised a Catholic, but now I'm agnostic. Despite this, I still find myself shouting "Oh God!" during orgasms. I have long wondered what women in other countries shout when they climax. What do you think?—G.V., Toledo, Ohio

Much has been said about the sudden apparent religiosity that descends on even the most ardent agnostics and nonbelievers at the moment of orgasm. References to a deity certainly cross borders, showing up in the German "Oh Gott" and Spanish "Dios mio," but we think these uses are more likely to be happy expletives rather than prayers. Along with variations on the "Oh God" theme, there are of course international versions of "I'm coming": "Iku" in Japanese; "Me corro" in Spanish; "Je viens" in French. No matter your faith or nationality, in that moment it's all metaphor—or, better yet, metaphor-play.

to a tattoo for life, consider opting out. The adage remains: Think before you ink.

For several years my wife and I have been collecting whiskey. Our collection now includes more than 150 bottles, and its total value is somewhere between \$10,000 and \$15,000. We are wondering what options exist to protect our investment. Recently we've seen advertisements for whiskey insurance to protect against broken bottles, theft and unauthorized consumption. Are these legitimate companies

and policies, or are we better off purchasing a rider on our homeowners insurance?—J.K., Glenville, New York

Contact your insurance agent and check your current coverage. It's possible your collection is already covered along with the rest of your belongings. If you do need a rider or have to increase your coverage, that will likely be much easier and more cost-effective than buying a separate policy. Whatever you choose to do, be sure to document each bottle on an itemized list and in photographs. Store these records off-site or online. Should misfortune befall your fine stash, you'll be glad you have these files to refer to.

My wife and I have been together for about two decades and have always had a good sex life and a great marriage. Shortly after we married we got into gameplay and soft swinging with a couple we knew. Unfortunately, the couple we were swinging with separated. I still have fantasies about engaging in gameplay and possibly a threesome with the man from this couple and my wife; he's still a close friend of ours. Is this a good idea? Is it normal?—D.L., Tampa, Florida

As much as we would all be comforted by the notion of normalcy, there's no such thing. If you're asking whether what you're suggesting is commonly accepted in society, it depends entirely on what society you're part of. You are already part of the swinging culture, in which having sex in front of other men is statistically more common than in society at large. As for whether it's a good idea to have a threesome, of course it's okay if everyone is on board. You seem to be a liberal and freewheeling crew, so we can't see any harm in at least inquiring. Just be prepared for a yes or a no, and if both your wife and your friend go for it, be sure to lay out the ground rules and expectations ahead of time.

I am 43 and look good for my age. I attribute this to diet, exercise and drinking a lot of water. Because I keep myself well hydrated, I have a hyperactive bladder. I usually have to urinate two times during the night. To avoid disrupting my sleep too much, I pee in a glass cup, which I clean regularly and keep beside the bed. I just started a new relationship and haven't yet exposed my girlfriend to my nighttime routine. Her bedroom doesn't have an attached bathroom, and I must go

down steep stairs to use the toilet at night. Sometimes I can't go back to sleep afterward. Is using my pee cup at night poor etiquette while I'm in a relationship?—U.L., Peoria, Illinois

It would be one thing if you were living in a cabin in the woods in the dead of winter under threat of attack from hungry bears with an outhouse as your only option for relieving yourself. But the days of chamber pots are long behind us, and it's time for you to retire this quirky indulgence before you scare away your new girlfriend. Try tapering off your water intake during the evening hours, basically refraining from your hyperhydration routine after six P.M. Just make sure you get plenty of water earlier in the day.

Not too long ago, my best friend became my boss. Soon after, he disciplined me at work over a slight matter, and I didn't think it was at all warranted. The whos and whats aren't particularly significant, but the result is that now I'm conflicted about being the best man at his upcoming wedding, a commitment I made well before our disagreement. Prior to the incident at work, I would have unhesitatingly served as his best man, but now I can't help but feel as though I would be disgracing his marriage if I am not fully committed. Am I being overly sensitive, or does my friend have an obligation to work this out with me to my satisfaction?—T.C., Lubbock, Texas

Don't let one small offense undo the years of goodwill you've clearly built up with each other. To refuse to be your friend's best man over this isolated instance, which you even characterize as "slight," would be petty. Is it possible you're resentful of him for becoming your boss and getting married? Could the incident have been caused by your friend's insecurity in his new role as your superior at work? Whether the answers are yes or no, the whats aren't actually that important, as you say. We're guessing that if you bury the hatchet and support your good friend on his wedding day, you'll feel a lot better about everything.

I have a problem with condoms slipping off while I'm having sex. I use regular, nonspecific sizes. I read some recent research that shows the average length of an erect penis is 5.2 inches, while the girth is 4.6. Mine is longer than 6.5 inches while erect with a girth well beyond 4.6 inches. This condom mishap has occurred a few times throughout my life, and I have friends who have complained about a similar problem. They feel snug when they go on but then suddenly slip off and disappear. Short of having to hold the condom to my shaft (I'd rather be doing other things with my hand), what can I do? Are there any condoms especially made to stay put?—C.B., Helena, Montana

Try going down a size in terms of your circumference. Look for condoms labeled or marketed as "snug" or "slim." (Don't worry, you will never have to ask for condoms in

a size small—there's no such thing, just as there are no 13th floors in most buildings.) Trojan ENZ and LifeStyles fit on the snugger, slimmer side. Also take care not to get any lubricant on the inside of the condom, which can cause it to slip off. In the interest of safe sex, don't abandon your hand-grip technique until you've made absolutely sure you've found the proper fit.

I am planning a trip to Japan next spring that will hopefully coincide with the blossoming of the cherry trees. In addition to that, I plan to see Mount Fuji, the white castle in Osaka and the Imperial Palace, among other sights. Another must for my vacation is booking an evening with a geisha. I'm aware that geishas are not prostitutes, and I am not expecting anything sexual. I'm more interested in a *maiko*, or apprentice geisha, because of her stricter attention to detail, more colorful kimono and makeup and elaborate hairstyle. I would love a one-on-one evening (probably with an interpreter) or perhaps a tea-party setting, or a combination of the two. I've read that a formal introduction is necessary, but I don't know what that means. The best geishas are in Kyoto, so I'm interested only in that city. How much would a geisha experience cost, and how would I go about booking one?—R.H., Toledo, Ohio

For a couple hundred dollars you can join a group experience at a popular ryokan (the term for a traditional hotel in Kyoto) and performance space called Gion Hatanaka, which includes musical and dance performances by geishas and the opportunity to speak with them, albeit briefly. You may have to share a table with other guests, but you can book this in advance online. It has gotten rave reviews. For a more intimate experience you might want to book a five-star hotel in Kyoto and use its concierge to arrange a dinner at a restaurant with a geisha and translator. These experiences can cost upward of \$1,000.

Are airline miles worth the trouble? Friends tell me they're getting tougher and tougher to redeem. I recently started traveling cross-country for work and am wondering if I should commit to one airline's frequent-flier program in the hopes that I'll eventually earn enough miles to fly to Asia without having to shell out any cash.—L.M., Sharon, Pennsylvania

It's true that blackout dates and crowded flights make it harder to redeem miles, but it doesn't hurt to commit to one carrier, particularly if your company is paying for your tickets. Just be sure the carrier flies to (or partners with airlines that travel to) your fantasy destination. To get a jump-start on stockpiling miles, search online for credit cards with big sign-up bonuses. A 40,000-mile sign-up bonus isn't uncommon, and if you pay all your big bills through that card, you should be able to accumulate enough

miles to get a free flight to Asia within a year. Don't expect to be able to redeem miles during peak travel times such as spring break, Christmas and high summer. And be sure to zero out your balance every month, as interest charges can rapidly eat up the value of the miles you've earned.

After decades of wearing standard neckties I recently switched to bow ties. I watched several YouTube tutorials to learn how to tie one and now have four bow ties in my collection. I wear them as often as I can. Here's my first question: How appropriate is it today to wear a bow tie instead of a necktie? Bow tie wearers are definitely in the minority, especially in the business world, though I have received many positive and complimentary comments when I've worn mine. Second: Sometimes the aristocratic characters on *Downton Abbey* wear white ties. Where can I buy one, and on what sort of occasion would I be able to wear it?—A.L., Oneonta, New York

The appropriateness of a bow tie in a business setting is entirely dependent on the kind of business you're talking about. Anyone who wears a bow tie is going to be seen as a person who wants to stand out from the crowd. In creative industries such as advertising, design or fashion, this can be a good thing, as the ability to make bold statements is seen as a desirable character trait and skill set. In finance or pharmaceuticals, not so much. But if you're going to wear a bow tie, knowing how to actually tie it shows true commitment to the look. You should probably avoid white ties altogether, as they are reserved only for the most formal of occasions (which would be designated as such by the organizer). If you do go white tie, go all-in: waistcoat (that long-in-the-back penguin suit), patent leather shoes. That said, don't hold your breath for such an invitation.

I love going down on my wife. What are the risks for my mouth and throat regarding whatever bacteria or viruses may normally be found down there? Neither of us has ever had another partner.—Y.W., Queens, New York

If you are both as virginal as you say, then you have little to worry about and should enjoy your comparatively unique status as each other's lifetime one and only. There is a small chance that if she were to have a yeast infection you might develop an oral yeast infection, known as thrush, but it's treatable and should in no way discourage you from having your cake and eating it too.

For answers to reasonable questions relating to food and drink, fashion and taste, and sex and dating, write the Playboy Advisor, 9346 Civic Center Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210, or e-mail advisor@playboy.com. The most interesting and pertinent questions will be presented in these pages each month.





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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: REZA ASLAN

A candid conversation with the outspoken scholar of religion as he takes on atheists, Jews and Christians, as well as his fellow Muslims

If it's true that in polite company one should avoid the subjects of politics and religion, don't invite Reza Aslan to your next dinner party. The Iranian American professor, author and pundit has voiced views on precisely these topics that have placed him at the center of contentious national debates and inspired threats on his life.

As fundamentalist Muslim factions perpetrate beheadings, suicide bombings and mass shootings in the name of their religion, Aslan has emerged as a defender of Islam, though he writes and speaks—in books, on CNN, in *The New York Times* and elsewhere—about all religions, including Christianity; indeed, his 2013 number one best-seller is *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*. He has also written the best-sellers *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution and Future of Islam*, and *How to Win a Cosmic War: The Taliban and other militant groups and religious violence in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*.

Commentators on both the left and the right sometimes vilify Aslan, but he gives as good as he gets. Of some of his most prominent adversaries, he has called Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, a “buffoon” and dismissed Sam Harris, the neuroscientist and author of *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion*,

as “an atheist fundamentalist.” Writing in *The New York Times*, Aslan attacked Bill Maher after a segment of *Real Time* on which Maher and Harris got into a heated exchange with Ben Affleck about Islam, which Harris said is “the mother lode of bad ideas.” (Affleck charged that their characterizations of Islam were “gross” and “racist.”) In the *Times*, Aslan wrote, “Making a blanket judgment about the world's second largest religion—is simply bigotry.”

Aslan was born in Iran but came to the U.S. with his family in 1979, when he was seven, during the Iranian revolution. They settled in Oklahoma and then in northern California. In America, Aslan, born Muslim, became an evangelical Christian but returned to his native faith while attending Santa Clara University. He earned a master's degree in theological studies from Harvard and then a Ph.D. in the sociology of religions from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He also has an MFA from the University of Iowa, where he was named the Truman Capote Fellow in Fiction.

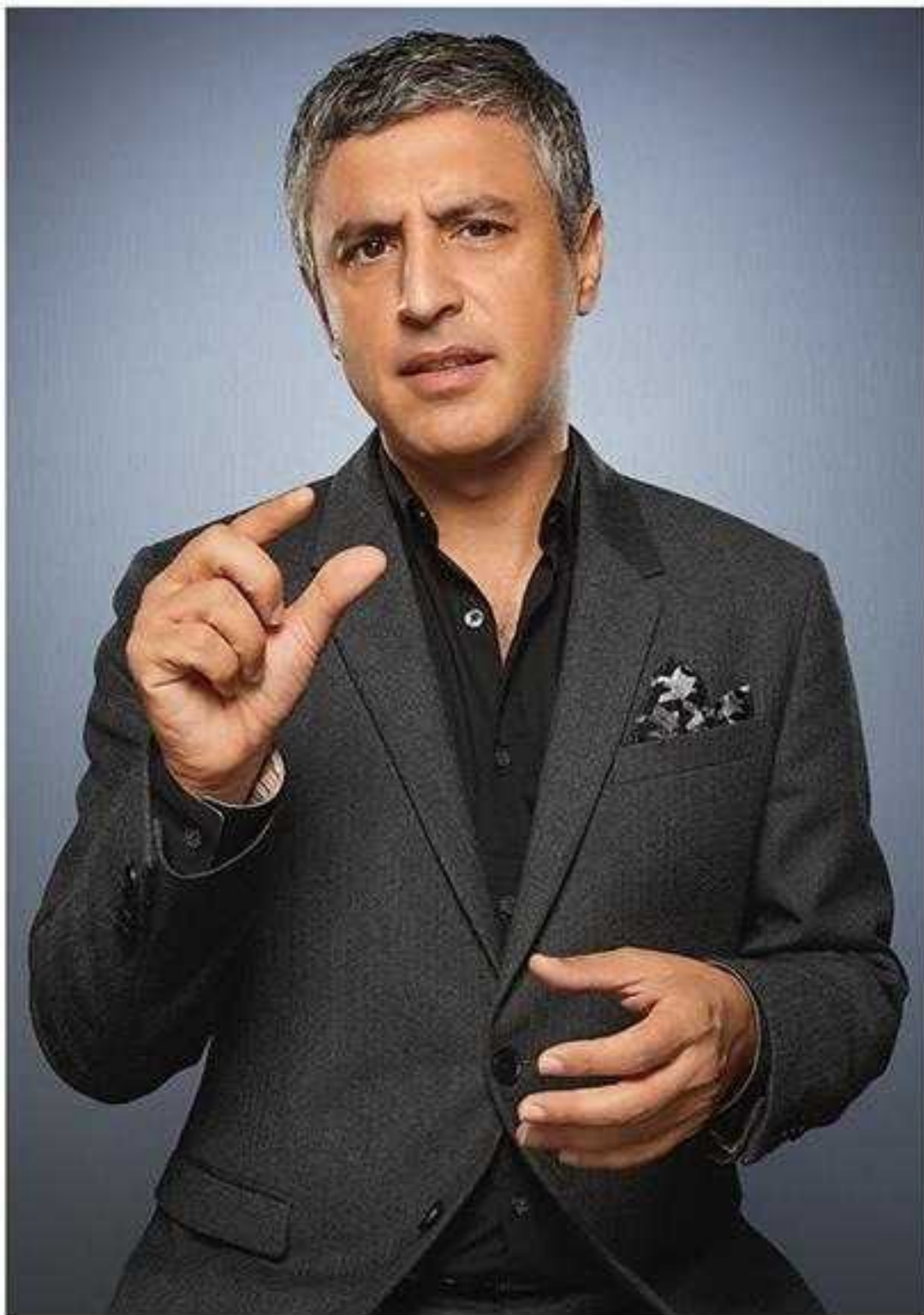
Aslan is currently shooting a documentary series for CNN called *Believer* (he describes it as “about religion the way Anthony Bourdain's show is about food”), producing a series for ABC based on the biblical story of King David and working as a consulting producer for the HBO

series *The Leftovers*. In addition, he works as a professor of creative writing at the University of California, Riverside. He's married to Jessica Jackley, an investor and entrepreneur who co-founded Kiva, the nonprofit micro-lending agency. They have three sons.

At a time when the militant Islamic group ISIS and terrorist attacks in Europe dominate the news, PLAYBOY sent contributing editor David Sheff to meet with Aslan. Sheff, whose last *Playboy* Interviews were with Chinese artist-dissident Ai Weiwei and sex-advice columnist Dan Savage, reports, “Aslan is a professor, so it was unsurprising that he was articulate and impassioned on the subjects about which he teaches and writes. He spoke loudly and forcefully, as if we were in a lecture hall rather than a chic Hollywood restaurant. Afterward, a woman who'd been sitting at a nearby table told me she'd been eavesdropping. ‘Before dinner I'd have agreed with Bill Maher,’ she said. ‘I believed the Muslim religion to be violent—jihad and the 72 virgins and all that. I see I was wrong.’ She'd learned what many of his adversaries know: ‘When Mr. Aslan starts talking, he's very convincing.’”

PLAYBOY: How do you feel being described as an apologist for Islam?

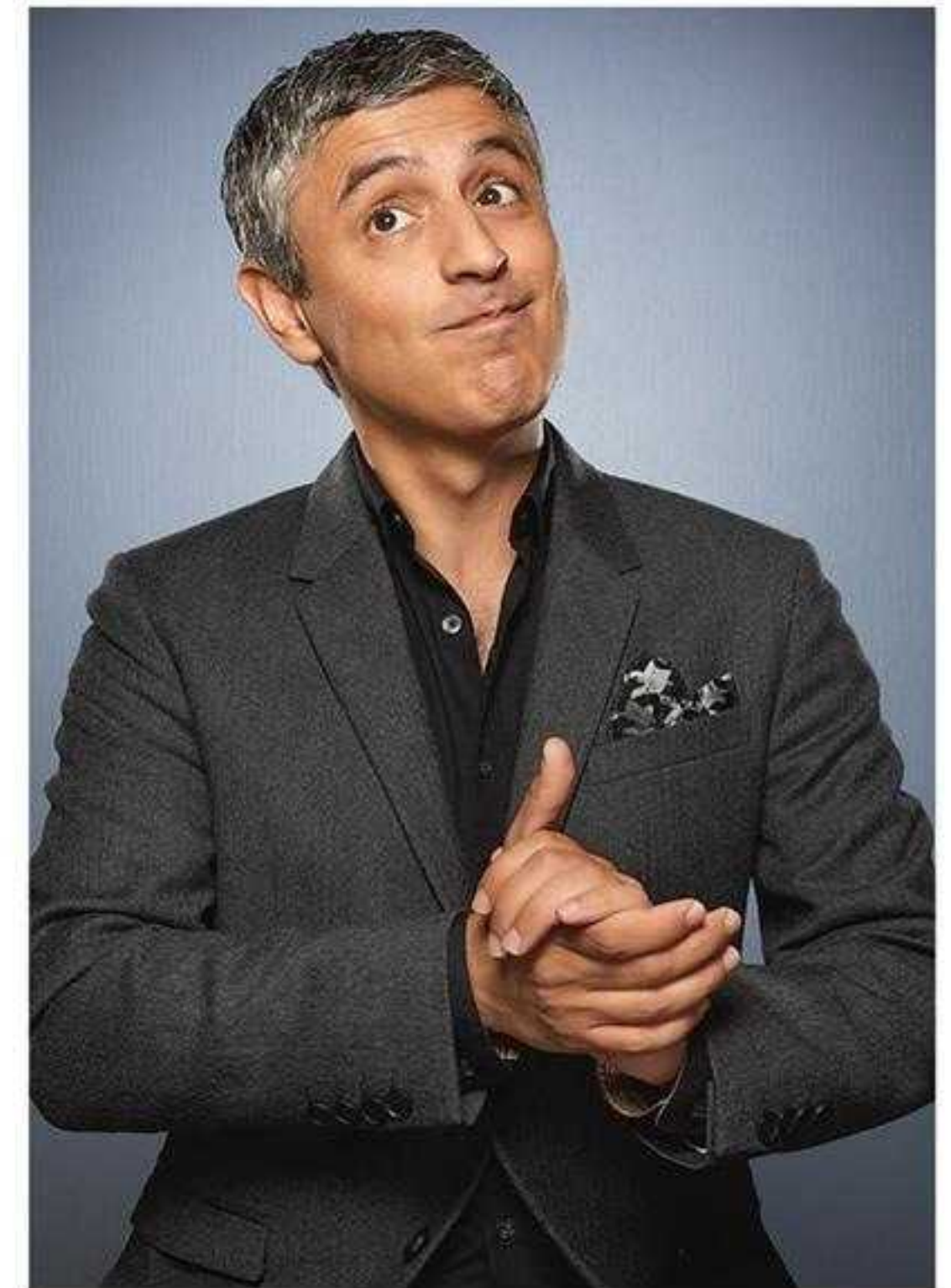
ASLAN: The thing is, I get it from both



“I get it from both sides. The religious groups think I'm too secular in the way I define religion, and the atheists paint me as a religious apologist because I refuse to denounce religious belief as irrational and illogical.”



“A generation from now, our children will look back on the rabid, despicable anti-Muslim rhetoric that has become part of the mainstream dialogue in this country and wonder what the hell was wrong with us.”



“I have so much love and affection and esteem for Jesus the man and what he preached that when I see people bastardizing that teaching for their own grotesque political and economic advantage, it enrages me.”

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARLIE LANGELLA

sides. The religious groups think I'm too secular in the way I define religion, and the atheists paint me as a religious apologist because I refuse to denounce religious belief as irrational and illogical. **PLAYBOY:** But in the wake of extreme violence committed in its name, are you surprised the Muslim faith is criticized?

ASLAN: There's something deeply schizophrenic about this country. We were founded on the very principle of religious freedom, and yet, if you look at our history, we have always transformed religious minorities into scapegoats, into the *other*. In the 19th century we passed federal laws to curb Catholic immigration to the United States. In the interwar period, anti-Semitism in this country was at absurd levels. You even had a business leader like Henry Ford forcing his dealerships around the country not to sell to Jews. Everything that was said about Catholics and about Jews is now being said about Muslims. "It's not really a religion, it's a political ideology." "How could you be loyal to Islam and loyal to America at the same time?" A generation from now, our children will look back on the rabid, despicable anti-Muslim rhetoric that has become part of the mainstream dialogue in this country and wonder what the hell was wrong with us. Then we'll find somebody else.

PLAYBOY: In the meantime, however, unspeakable violence is being carried out by people who claim to be doing so in the name of Islam.

ASLAN: Violence in the name of Islam is absolutely out of control, especially in the Middle East, which is facing profound political, economic and social instability. With all that, religious radicalism, regardless of what religion you're talking about, surfaces. In the Central African Republic, the problem of religious radicalism in that unstable country is Christian radicalism. You have Christian youth slaughtering women and children with machetes. In Myanmar, an unstable part of the world that's majority Buddhist, you have acts of extreme Buddhist violence. Marauding Buddhist mobs are killing women and children in the name of Buddhism.

PLAYBOY: But there's no denying that many of the most brutal attacks are committed in the name of Islam by fundamentalists—for example, the mass shootings in January at *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris.

ASLAN: The tragic attacks in Paris are a culmination of a decades-long crisis of identity that has gripped large parts of Europe. For many Europeans, it is becoming increasingly difficult to define what it means to be British, to be French, to be German. The European Union has dissolved the borders and boundaries that separate Europeans into distinct nation-states. In doing so, it has diminished the sense of national identity that has formed a bedrock of the continent. As difficult as this process has been for indigenous Eu-

ropeans, it is even more difficult for immigrants, particularly those from North Africa and the Middle East. They were never given an opportunity to assimilate into European culture. They were crowded in ethnically segregated neighborhoods. They were not given the opportunity to integrate into European society. In many cases they were not given citizenship. So they felt neither European nor Middle Eastern. It's no wonder you see the extreme polarization throughout Europe between, on one hand, far-right, ultra-nationalistic, even neo-Nazi groups like UKIP in Britain or Pegida in Germany that blame all their troubles on immigration and multiculturalism and, on the other, identity-less youth who feel they're under attack by their own populations. This is precisely why jihadism has found a foothold in Europe. Jihadism thrives in these kinds of identity vacuums. The message they preach to Europe's young Muslims is that the reason they don't feel Brit-

For the vast majority of Americans, the only Muslims they know are the Muslims they see on TV.

ish or French or German is because they *aren't*. Nor are they Turkish or Algerian or Pakistani. They have no national identity whatsoever. The very concept of nationality is a sin; it's anathema to Islam. They are Muslims and nothing more. They are part of a global community under siege and it is their duty to come to the aid of any Muslim, anywhere in the world, to defend Islam, particularly from Europe. This is a compelling message for a great many of Europe's Muslim youth. It must be counteracted with a robust attempt to make these young people a part of Europe, to make them feel as though they have a home there. Otherwise we will be dealing with these kinds of tragic consequences in Europe for many years to come.

PLAYBOY: With the emergence of ISIS in the Middle East, the tactics being used have been horrifying. In *The New York Times* you wrote about Bill Maher's response to President Obama's assertion that ISIS doesn't represent Islam

and Maher's statement that Islam has "too much in common with ISIS." You wrote, "People of faith are far too eager to distance themselves from extremists in their community, often denying that religious violence has any religious motivation whatsoever." Isn't it crucial to make a distinction between extremists' actions and the basic tenets of Islam or any other religion?

ASLAN: I understand the desire among any community of faith to distance themselves from extremists within their community, to label them as "not us." When you had Anders Breivik, the Norwegian self-described "Christian warrior," slaughter 77 people in Norway, the vast majority of them children, most Christians in this country said "That's not Christianity; he's not a Christian" in the same way that when we see a member of ISIS beheading women and children and selling women into sexual slavery, most Muslims in this country say "That's not Islam; he's not really a Muslim." Well, here's the thing. Anyone who says he's a Muslim is a Muslim. Anyone who says he's a Christian is a Christian. If someone says they're acting in accordance with their belief system, we should probably take their word for it. I get why we don't want to, because it's grotesque and, frankly, hard to justify when compared with what these religions actually preach.

PLAYBOY: Is it not true that jihad is an essential part of the Muslim faith?

ASLAN: If that were true, it would mean the 1.6 billion Muslims in the world are currently out killing apostates. What we have now is a bunch of armchair experts either scouring the scriptures for bits of savagery or watching the news and using that as some kind of field research and passing themselves off as experts in the lived experience of billions of people around the world. It's silly and offensive, and for the life of me I cannot understand why anyone takes it seriously.

PLAYBOY: It's because perpetrators of violence take it seriously.

ASLAN: We live in a Christian-majority country. Seven out of 10 Americans self-identify as Christian. Christianity oozes from the very fabric of this country. Our laws are based in large part on Christian morality. When they're confronted with extremism in the Christian community, it's easy for Americans to see it as an outlier. If your neighbor is a Christian, if your grocer is a Christian, if your teacher is a Christian, if your best friend is a Christian, when you see someone do something appalling in the name of Christianity, you have an easy reference point for defining that as extremist. But one percent of America's population is Muslim, and about 37 percent of Americans claim to have ever met a Muslim. And so there isn't that reference point. If the only Muslim you've ever heard of is the Muslim you see on Sean Hannity—

PLAYBOY: Or Osama bin Laden.

ASLAN: Or Osama bin Laden, yes, then that's your view of Islam. The media report on the plane that crashed, not the plane that took off. If the only thing you knew about planes was what you read in the media, you would assume that every plane crashes. For the vast majority of Americans, the only Muslims they know at all are the Muslims they see on TV, and the only Muslims they see on TV are fanatics and extremists, so it makes perfect sense that they would draw these facile connections between the Muslim they see on Fox News and the Muslim they may confront in their neighborhood. As any social scientist will tell you, perceptions are altered not by information or data but by relationships. If you simply know a single individual in an "out" group, it absolutely transforms your image of that group. My mother-in-law is a perfect example of this. She thought all Muslims were what she saw on Sean Hannity. Then she met me.

PLAYBOY: So your wife isn't Muslim?

ASLAN: She is the WASPiest WASP you will ever meet in your life. She's from Pittsburgh, salt-of-the-earth white evangelical Protestant.

PLAYBOY: Did your families have trouble with each of you marrying outside your faiths?

ASLAN: It was a little strange. I was the first Muslim her family had ever met. Jessica's mom would freely admit that the only thing she knew about Muslims was what Sean Hannity told her. It's a testament not just to that family but to the power of relationships in transforming people's perceptions, because she went from worrying about how her grandchildren would grow up around what she called "all that violence" to absolutely falling in love with me and with Jessica and my relationship. We have the closest, most wonderful relationship you could imagine. And even better, she stopped watching Sean Hannity.

PLAYBOY: But it's not only Hannity and other commentators from the right who fuel the fires about Muslims. Bill Maher is a liberal.

ASLAN: Which is troubling. Now it's not only the conservative xenophobes who are making this argument. It's self-styled liberals who are doing it in the name of liberalism. Bill Maher's entire point is that liberals don't criticize horrific human rights abuses carried out by Muslims, which is ridiculous. It's an ignorant statement if I've ever heard one. The people at the forefront of the feminist movement in the Muslim world are liberals. The people at the forefront of the democratic movement in the Muslim world are liberals. The NGOs fighting against barbaric practices like stoning or female genital mutilation are liberals! What Bill Maher means is "Liberals don't hate Muslims like I do," and therefore they're not really critical of it. But that is not a liberal value. It's

becoming harder and harder to tell the difference between a conservative and a liberal when it comes to this issue of xenophobia against Muslims.

PLAYBOY: On Maher's show, the actor Ben Affleck became the defender of Muslims.

ASLAN: Although Affleck couldn't properly put into words the emotions that were welling up in him when confronted with such obvious and undeniable bigotry, the emotions themselves are reflective of a liberal viewpoint. A true liberal cannot abide any kind of blanket generalization of anyone—of any race, creed or ethnicity, period. So what you saw in that passionate response was true liberalism.

PLAYBOY: Maher, Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris are prominent atheists. You've frequently criticized the new atheist movement, but the number of atheists in America is increasing. How do you account for the growing interest in atheism?

ASLAN: Yes. It's almost seven percent, apparently, though the latest Pew poll puts it at three percent. It's nominal. We have

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we'll have peace.*

been talking about the death of God for a long time. At a certain point we have to just come to the realization that religion is not going anywhere. On the contrary, I would argue that religion is a greater force in the world today than it has been in centuries. I think atheists have this fantasy that eventually we'll rid ourselves of religion, and when we do, we'll have peace and prosperity and harmony. That was the entire premise of the 20th century, wasn't it, that if we just simply remove religion as a major factor of identity and instead identify ourselves according to nationalism—secular nationalism—then we'll have the peace and prosperity we're always searching for? That led to two world wars and the death of tens of millions of people in the name of nationalism and secularism. I think this fantasy that the way to deal with religious violence is to get rid of religion has to go away.

PLAYBOY: Do you agree that fundamentalism is most often born of social ills, including poverty?

ASLAN: There's no question that religious extremism is intimately tied to socio-political and socioeconomic factors. At the same time, it's overly simplistic to say that if you deal with socioeconomic issues, it will necessarily excise religious fanaticism. It won't, but they are intimately connected, because religion is not about the things you believe or the things you do; it's about who you are. It's your very identity. It encompasses your politics, your economic views, your ethnicity, your culture, your gender, your sexual orientation. It is one of a multiplicity of factors that define who you are as a human being, and so it cannot be extracted from those things.

PLAYBOY: Do you agree that U.S. policies—for example, in the war on terror, the use of drones and the collateral damage they inflict—encourage religious fanaticism?

ASLAN: We've long known that religion provides a powerful language to express grievances, dispossession and marginalization, because religion has the most currency for the masses. Was the war on terror expressed to the American public as a complex pseudo-military police investigation of an international criminal conspiracy? No. It was expressed as a battle between the forces of good and evil. That's something every American can understand, because that language affects us in a deep and personal way, whether we're religious or not. When you're confronted with any experience of marginalization or dispossession, when you have grievances that go unaddressed or aspirations that cannot be met, or when you feel as though your safety, security and very identity are under attack, religion steps in in a beautiful way to provide the language you need to express that frustration and alienation. Of course drones dropping bombs haphazardly on civilian populations is going to result in greater religious extremism. Of course dispossession of land and the removal of opportunity are going to result in religious extremism.

PLAYBOY: Given that, how should the U.S. address beheadings, suicide bombings and similar terrorist tactics of religious fundamentalists?

ASLAN: First of all, let's be clear about something. Fundamentalism is a reactionary phenomenon—to social progress, to liberalism, to scientific advancement. If you understand fundamentalism as a reactionary phenomenon, then you recognize that it will always exist as long as social advancement and social progress exist. There will always be those who, perhaps because they feel left behind by that advancement, revert to the most static, basic tenets of their beliefs. That's a long way of saying there ain't nothing we can do about fundamentalism. I don't have a problem with fundamentalists. If you are a Christian who believes that women should be seen and

not heard, fine. I think that's despicable, but so what? If you are a Muslim who believes that all gay people are going to burn in hell, fine! I think that's disgusting and I disagree, but who cares? I don't have a problem with your beliefs. I have a problem when your beliefs turn into actions that violate basic human rights. That's what we should be focusing on: not people's beliefs but people's actions.

PLAYBOY: But every day those beliefs do lead to actions—horrific actions.

ASLAN: But painting all believers with the same brush as the extremists just alienates all believers. It turns them away from us, when in reality they are the most valuable tool in our arsenal against fanaticism and extremism.

PLAYBOY: How are they a tool?

ASLAN: If you are a fanatic or an extremist who is killing people, enslaving people, violating their most fundamental human rights, you need to be confronted in the strongest terms possible—militarily, ideologically, legally, whatever it takes. However, at the same time, we have to understand that a lot of the succor these fanatics gain comes precisely from the impression that they are fighting for the rights of the aggrieved masses. ISIS draws people to it because it claims to be addressing their grievances. Unless we're willing to address those very legitimate grievances, we may be able to counteract the militants themselves, but we'll never counteract the ideology behind that militancy.

PLAYBOY: Is that also true of the Taliban?

ASLAN: It's similar in the sense that grievances are important and addressing grievances is important. There is, however, a major difference between groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS and groups like Hezbollah and Hamas. The notion that these groups are the same, as Benjamin Netanyahu never tires of saying for his own propagandist reasons, or as George W. Bush liked to say—not for propagandist reasons but from a position of utter ignorance—is an incredibly dangerous misunderstanding. Al Qaeda and ISIS are jihadist organizations. Hamas and Hezbollah are Islamist organizations. An Islamist is a religious nationalist. His entire agenda stops at the borders of what he considers his nation-state. Hezbollah is utterly uninterested in any non-nationalistic ideology. Hamas wants Palestine and nothing else. When you want something concrete and measurable, there's room for debate, there's room for dialogue, there's room for negotiation. Most important, there's room for moderation. Indeed, what we have seen over and over again is that when Islamist groups have an opportunity to take part in the political process, one of two things happens: Either they moderate their ideologies, as the Justice and Development Party in Turkey did, and they experience enormous political success, or they don't moderate their ideologies, as

the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt did, and they crash and burn spectacularly.

In contrast, jihadists are not just transnationalist; they are *antinationalist*. ISIS and Al Qaeda not only are uninterested in nation building, they want to get rid of all nation-states. They want to reconstitute the globe as a single world order under their control. That's what the caliphate means for them—a new world order.

PLAYBOY: Many fundamentalists also want to erase Israel. What's your response to Netanyahu's controversial appearance before Congress in Washington in March?

ASLAN: At this point Netanyahu is the best thing to have ever happened to those seeking not just negotiations between the United States and Iran but rapprochement. His tired, over-the-top rhetoric, his clear desire to scuttle negotiations and his refusal to offer any alternative—not to mention that he has

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been wrong about Iran for 25 years—only reinforces the argument of those who claim that without a negotiated compromise to Iran's nuclear program the only alternative is war. The one thing this man has managed to do is unite those forces struggling for peace in a way that even six months ago I would have said was inconceivable.

PLAYBOY: You support negotiating with Iran, but how should we respond to the nation's fundamentalist factions?

ASLAN: We must remember that the greatest weapon in the fight against fanaticism is the vast majority of the religious community that shares a set of similar beliefs but rejects the extremist interpretation of those beliefs. When we color the entire community as extremists, we're doing something that is self-defeating in our fight against extremism.

PLAYBOY: This goes back to President Obama repeatedly emphasizing that violence by Muslim extremists isn't a

reflection of Islam. Is it important that he does so?

ASLAN: Yes, and he is smart enough to know that the kind of simplistic and bigoted rhetoric we hear so often from the anti-Muslim crowd is a detriment to our national security. However, it is important to understand that, technically speaking, the president is wrong. The members of ISIS are Muslim for the simple fact that they declare themselves to be Muslim. We can say that their Islam is an extreme form of Islam, that it's anti-Koranic, that it's in opposition to the overwhelming majority of Muslims in the world, but there is no Muslim pope. There's no Muslim Vatican that gets to decide who is and who is not a Muslim.

PLAYBOY: But how is it anti-Koranic? It's not anti *their* Koran.

ASLAN: Right. It picks and chooses the verses it likes and ignores the ones it doesn't, which, by the way, every Muslim does, as every adherent to every religion in the world does. It's why Christians can be capitalists.

PLAYBOY: Meaning?

ASLAN: If you look at the beginning of Jesus's life, you are talking about an extremely poor, uneducated, very likely illiterate, marginal Jewish peasant in the backwoods of Galilee, someone who can be referred to as a country bumpkin, who despite all that, through the power of his charisma, his creativity and his teachings, started a movement specifically on behalf of the poor and the weak and the marginalized—a movement that was seen as a threat to the prevailing powers of the time, and they ultimately arrested, tortured and executed him for sedition.

PLAYBOY: This is the subject of your book *Zealot*. In it, you say that in his life, Jesus was a political figure even more than a religious one. Why is that relevant?

ASLAN: This is a man who loathed wealth and power, who was adamant in his condemnation of political and religious authority, a self-styled gatekeeper of salvation, who preached almost exclusively to the poor and the marginalized, whose entire conception of what he called the Kingdom of God was predicated on the reversal of the social order, where the rich would be made poor and the poor would be made rich, where the hungry would be fed and the fed would go hungry, where those who rejoice would mourn and those who mourn would rejoice, where the first would be last and the last would be first.

Marxism talks about everybody being on the same field, but this man is talking about switching places! There is something so radical and revolutionary about that idea that has been completely lost in the marriage of Christianity with power. If you know that, how can you have someone like [televangelist] Joel Osteen making millions and millions of dollars preaching what he calls the "prosperity gospel"—this idea that what Jesus really wants for you is *(continued on page 116)*



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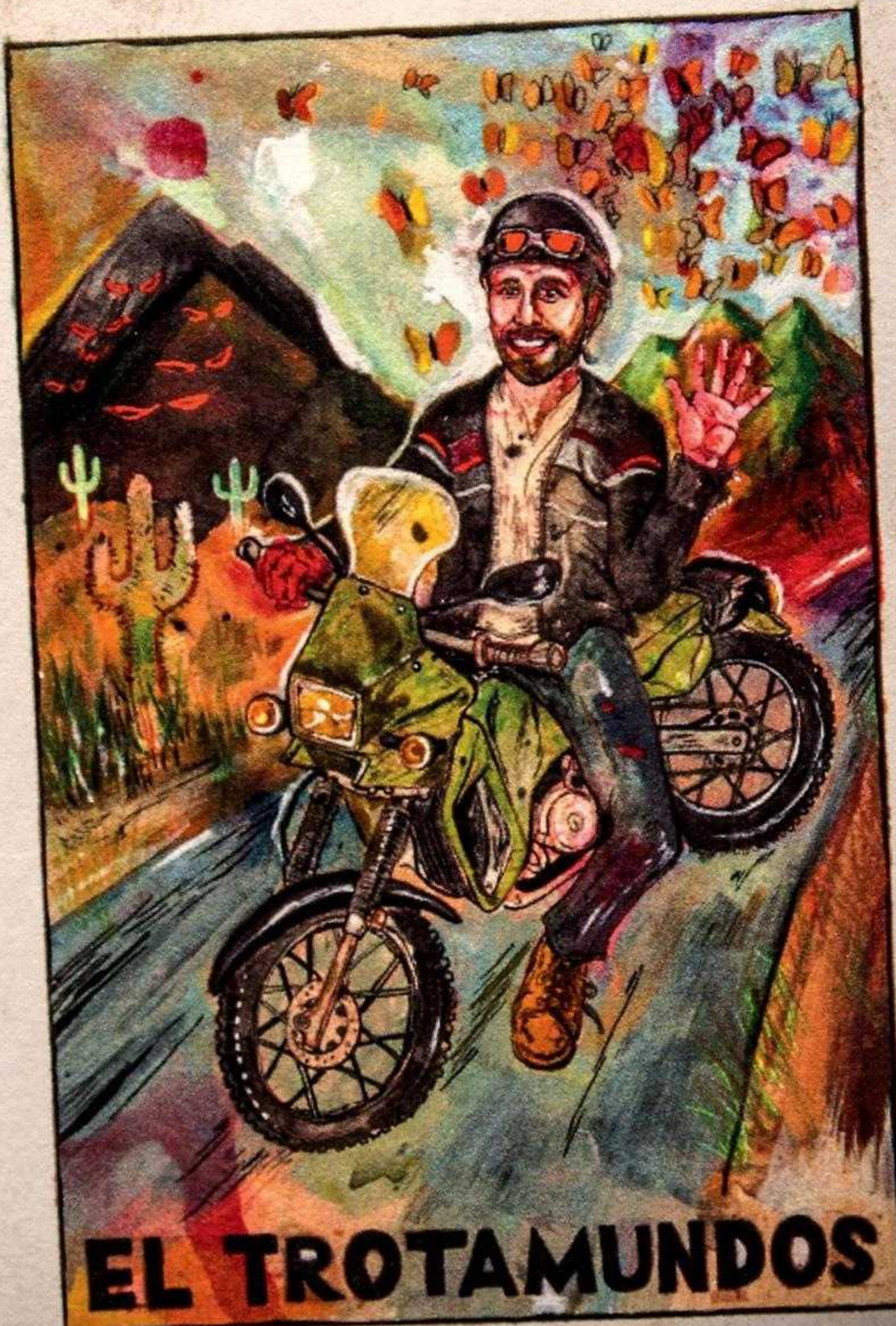
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NARCO



EL TROTAMUNDOS

A WRONG TURN IN MEXICO

Harry Devert ditched his finance job for a life of adventure and a two-year motorcycle journey to Brazil. His disappearance on a deserted Mexican road created a war between drug cartels and raised questions nobody wants to answer

BY JASON MCGAHAN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIGUEL VALENZUELA

E

ight Mexican soldiers form a loose perimeter in the grass, machine guns slack at their sides. Fifty yards back in the direction of the highway, a metal sign along a gravel road announces the entrance to a lonely beach called La Majahua. The men, members of the 75th Infantry Battalion of the Mexican

National Defense Forces, are there following up on an anonymous tip about a body. They have found what they were looking for: a motorcycle, caked in dried mud, lying on its side, propped on a woodpile. Two large trash bags, bulging and tied shut, sit beside the bike; a faint odor of decay emanates from them. A seasoned crime reporter at the scene, accustomed to the smell, estimates the remains inside have been decomposing for at least a month. It is 4:30 P.M. on July 10, 2014.

The men exchange observations about the site, noting the fresh set of vehicle tracks leading from the dirt path to the bike and how the motorcycle has been stripped of its gauges, handlebars, motor and seat. The vehicle ID number, however, remains visible. Dried mud encrusts every inch of the bike; investigators agree that it was buried, then later exhumed and left in the open, where it was sure to be found.

The oldest soldier extends a BlackBerry in front of him to take a photograph while an officer in a camouflage hat quietly inspects it. Back at headquarters, the battalion's high command receives the photo and a message from the scene: "It's him."



In 2012, Harry Devert returned to his hometown of Pelham, New York, a suburb 10 minutes north of the Bronx, after five years of adventuring around the world. He arrived just before Thanksgiving, having been home only a few times during the previous years and never for more than

"HARRY DIDN'T CONSIDER FACTORS LIKE RISK OR TIME. WHERE HE WENT WAS SIMPLY A MATTER OF WHAT HE WANTED TO SEE."

a couple of weeks at a time. He would visit with his widowed mother, meet with the renters in the house his father had left him and grab a beer with friends. He never unpacked.

His mother, Ann, was walking her dog when she noticed the next-door neighbor talking to a scrawny stranger with a full beard and dressed like a guru



1. Harry Devert with friends at a rodeo competition in Guanajuato, Mexico days before he disappeared. 2. Devert in Colombia, November 2013. 3. Devert's planned route would have taken him to Brazil in time for the 2014 World Cup. 4. Mexican media referred to Devert as El Trotamundos ("the Wanderer"). 5. Devert on his motorcycle.

in flowing pants. She didn't recognize her only son. Devert was 31, and his friends were getting married, buying houses and having kids. The neighbor who worked for the family business five years ago now ran it. The friend who traded stocks and blew through 10 grand in one night in South Beach was married on Long Island with two kids. Devert saw the ex-girlfriend he almost married wipe up baby spit-up with a dish towel.

He wrote in an e-mail, "What had I been doing this whole time? Had I been running away from all of this? Was I scared to face this world I barely recognized? Was growing up more terrifying than falling down the side of a cave in the middle of a Vietnamese jungle days away from any human life whatsoever, trying to just fight to keep my eyes open because I thought that if I let myself fall asleep that I'd never wake up like always seems to happen in the movies? Yes, actually, very much so."

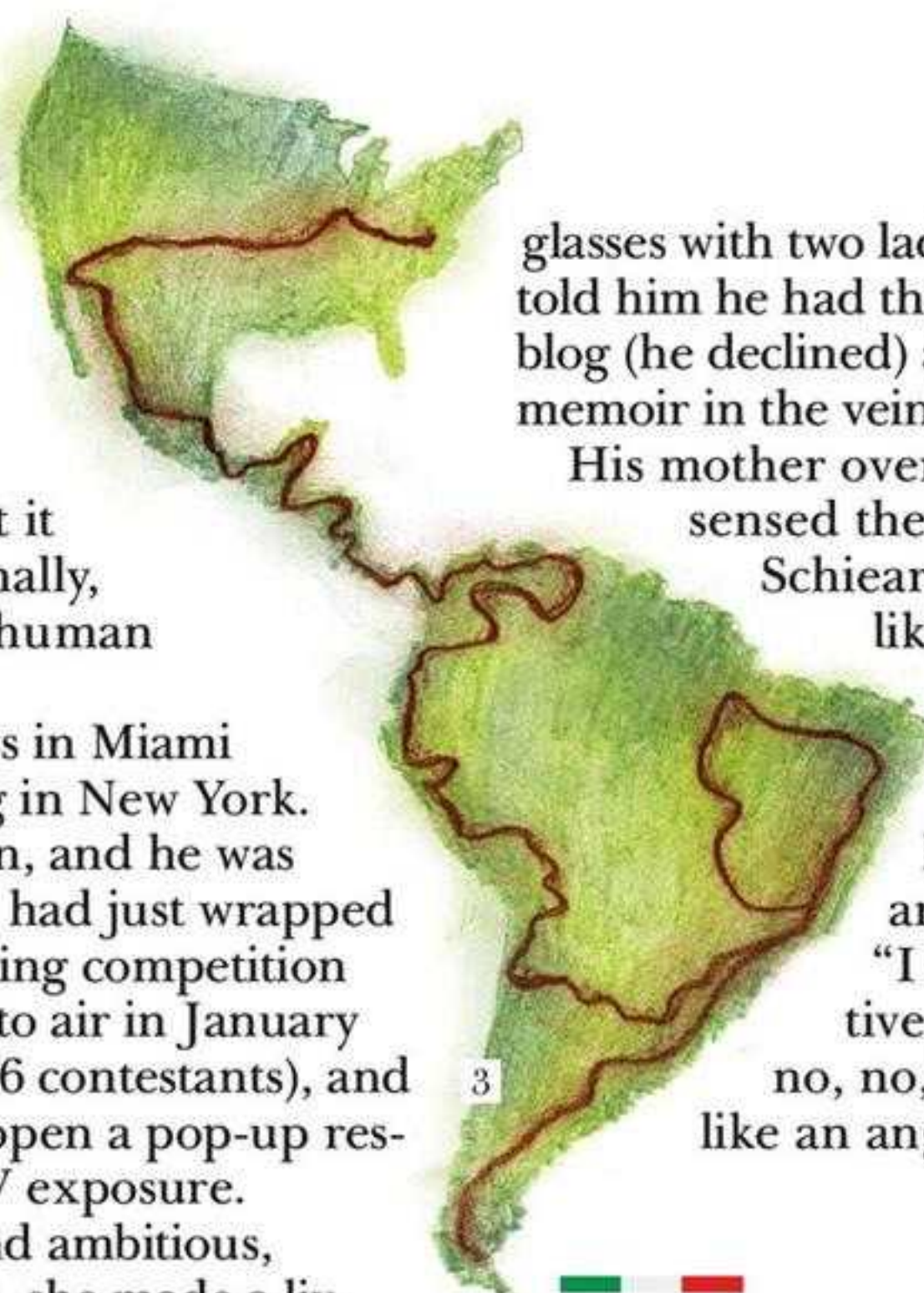
The novelty of being home wore off quickly. Devert needed money to travel, but no one would



hire him. Six weeks as a volunteer at the Mother Teresa Center in Calcutta and a month working in rice paddies for room and board in the Philippines weren't going to cut it with prospective employers. Finally, a friend's wife got him a job in human resources on Long Island.

Then a neighbor from his days in Miami got in touch to say she was living in New York. They met for a drink in Midtown, and he was awestruck. Sarah Ashley Schiear had just wrapped up shooting for *The Taste*, a cooking competition show on ABC. It was scheduled to air in January 2013 (she finished third out of 16 contestants), and she had moved to New York to open a pop-up restaurant and capitalize on her TV exposure.

Schiear was direct, practical and ambitious, and, most eye-opening to Devert, she made a living doing what she loved. Devert did nice things for her, including assembling IKEA furniture for her new apartment in NoHo and showing up to support the opening of her restaurant (he clinks champagne



glasses with two ladies in a promotional video). She told him he had the charisma to host a video travel blog (he declined) and encouraged him to write a memoir in the vein of *Eat, Pray, Love*.

His mother overheard phone conversations and sensed the tenderness in Devert's voice.

Schiear loved his stories about places like Nepal and Venezuela, about families who invited him into their homes and how he woke up with kids crawling all over him. She sensed he was special and told him he could be famous. "I tend to think of myself as positive and seeing the good, but no, no, no," Schiear says. "He is honestly like an angel."

The motorcycle was an 11-year-old olive-green Kawasaki KLR650, a.k.a. the Swiss Army knife of motorcycles, a.k.a. the poor man's BMW. It's an all-terrain dual-purpose motorcycle built to

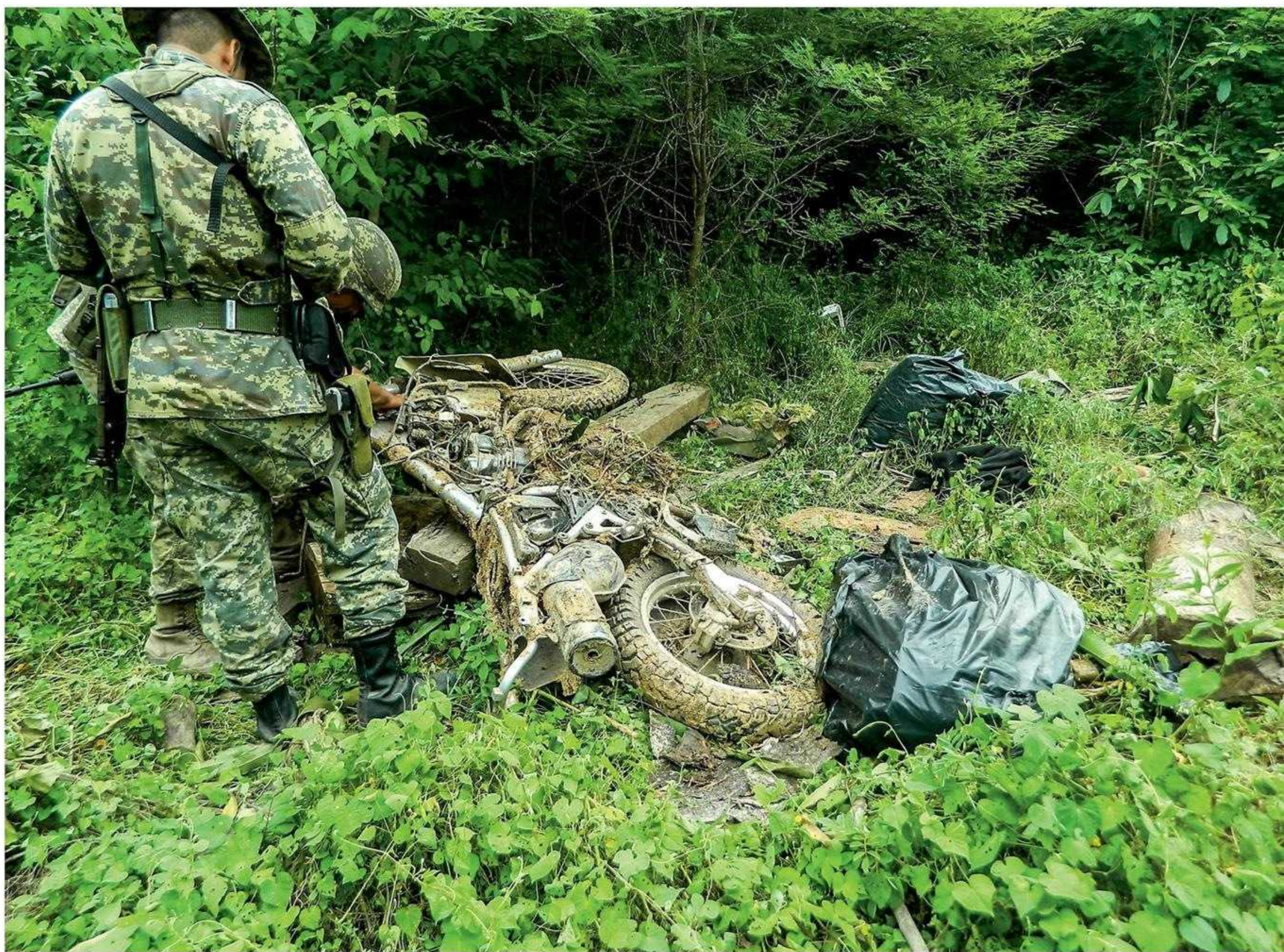
travel long distances on- and off-road. Devert bought it from an ex-Marine in Brooklyn with \$2,500 he got from selling an anniversary-edition Cartier watch, one of the last mementos from his days in finance. Devert climbed aboard,

rode 10 feet and fell over sideways. He got back on and started it up, kicked the bike into first gear and tumbled to the ground again.

Not knowing how to ride a motorcycle was part of the adventure for Devert. The idea—a two-year motorcycle journey to Brazil—was born of a fantasy, a totally impractical plan that he intended to see through to reality, risks be damned. Like the time in Vietnam when he set off in search of the world's largest cave with nothing but the dim memory of a photograph he had seen in *National Geographic*. The magazine kept the location of the cave a secret, and Devert headed off during rainy season with no trail. He spent eight days lost in the jungle and ran out of food, but he found the cave and returned with a photo identical to the one on the magazine cover.

"If Harry had been born in the 15th century he would have been Christopher Columbus," says one traveling partner, Pau Balaguer. "He was extreme, too extreme." Balaguer, a native of Barcelona and a former stock trader, met Devert in a swimming pool in Pai, a backpacker town in north-west Thailand, and recognized him as a kindred spirit. Devert was limping badly from an injury he sustained during the Buddhist New Year celebration in Chiang Mai. Leaping from one moving truck to another, he slipped, sliced his pinkie toe to the bone and eventually had the gash stitched up ("with the help of a bottle of whiskey and a sock to bite down on," Devert later wrote).





“THERE WERE RUMORS OF DEA AGENTS IN THE AREA. TO GO AROUND FILMING PEOPLE WAS SUICIDAL.”

They traveled together in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. They wrecked their motorbikes on an eight-day loop of villages in Laos, feasted on cow eyes at a village wedding and were arrested for hitchhiking in Pakse. In Cambodia, security guards at Angkor Wat permitted them to stay after hours and watch the sunset from the temple walls, and the nephew of Prime Minister Hun Sen allegedly threatened them with a knife at a party in Phnom Penh. In Laos, Devert bought a bag of mushrooms and woke up at dawn, alone and naked on a stranger's roof in Luang Prabang.

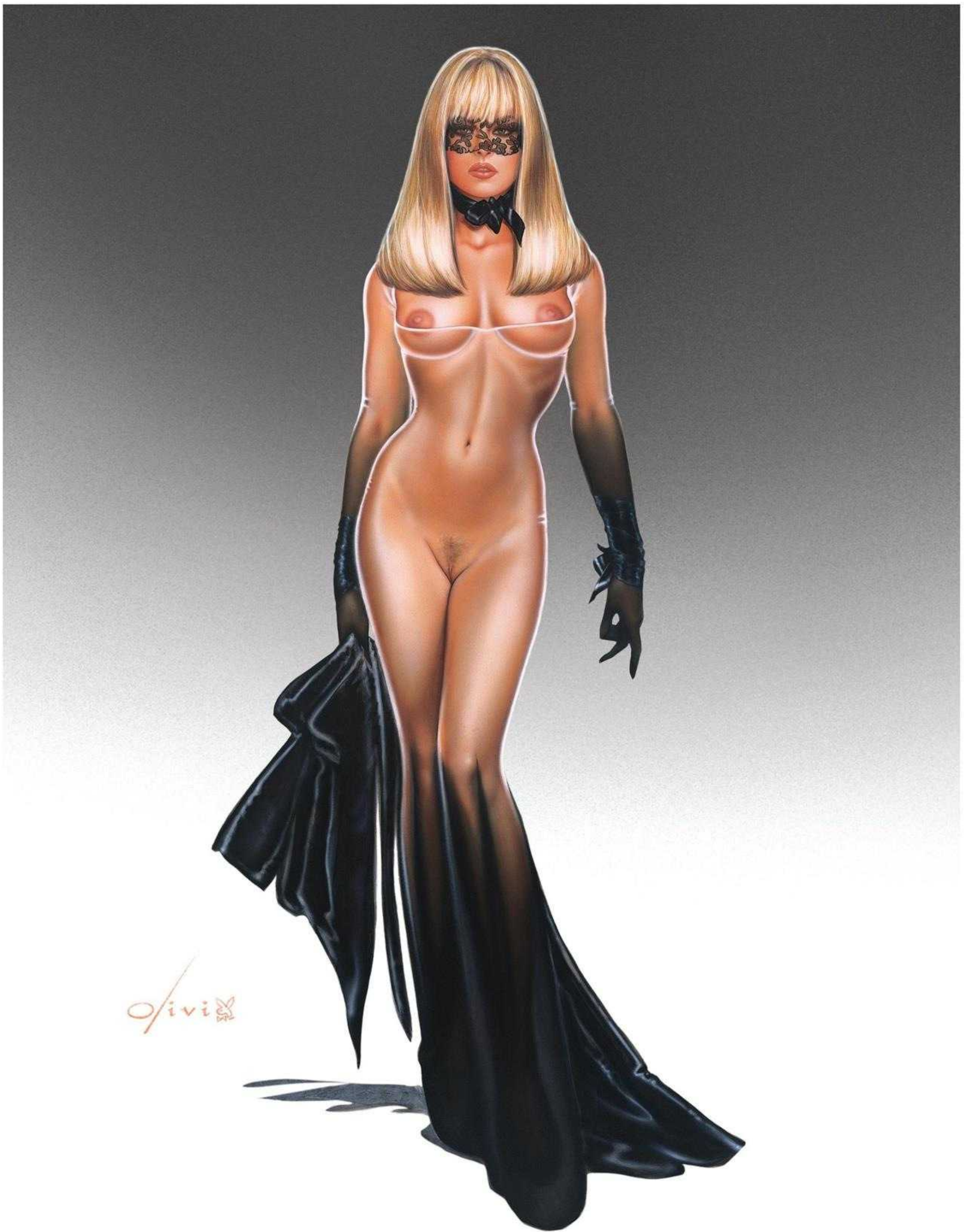
“Maybe your mind thinks that this is your limit, but with Harry you feel so comfortable that your limit goes to the double. And you feel safe. You feel like, I’m a good person, so all the people around me are good people. Why would something bad ever happen to me?” Balaguer says. “Very deep

in my soul I was thinking Harry will die young because he took too many risks.”

In October 2013, three months before Devert hit the road again, he posted the first entry about his trip on his new website, *A New Yorker Travels*. The headline read, NYC TO THE TIP OF SOUTH AMERICA ON A MOTORCYCLE I DON’T KNOW HOW TO RIDE. He included a Google map of his proposed route, a bold squiggly line that would have made Che Guevara blush: 18 countries in two years, from New York to California to Mexico, touching every country in Central America from Belize to Panama, then a ferry to Colombia, a loop through Venezuela, then down the length of the Pacific coast of Ecuador and Peru, into Bolivia and across northern Argentina to Brazil in time for the 2014 World Cup. When the Cup ended he would head to Uruguay and farther south through Argentina’s Patagonia, as far south as South America goes, to Ushuaia, the city at the tip of Tierra del Fuego. The sheer impossibility of the journey lent it the aura of not only a great adventure but a great feat. He thought he would document the trip and maybe write a book about it.

“Some people dream of traveling the world, climbing mountains, sailing across oceans or down jungle rivers, and some people dream about owning a house, getting a promotion, buying a new watch or eating at a new restaurant,” he wrote in the last essay he published on his *(continued on page 128)*

↑ Soldiers from the Mexican National Defense Forces located Devert’s motorcycle near a lonely beach called La Majahua after receiving an anonymous tip.



"I am dressed for a costume party, darling."

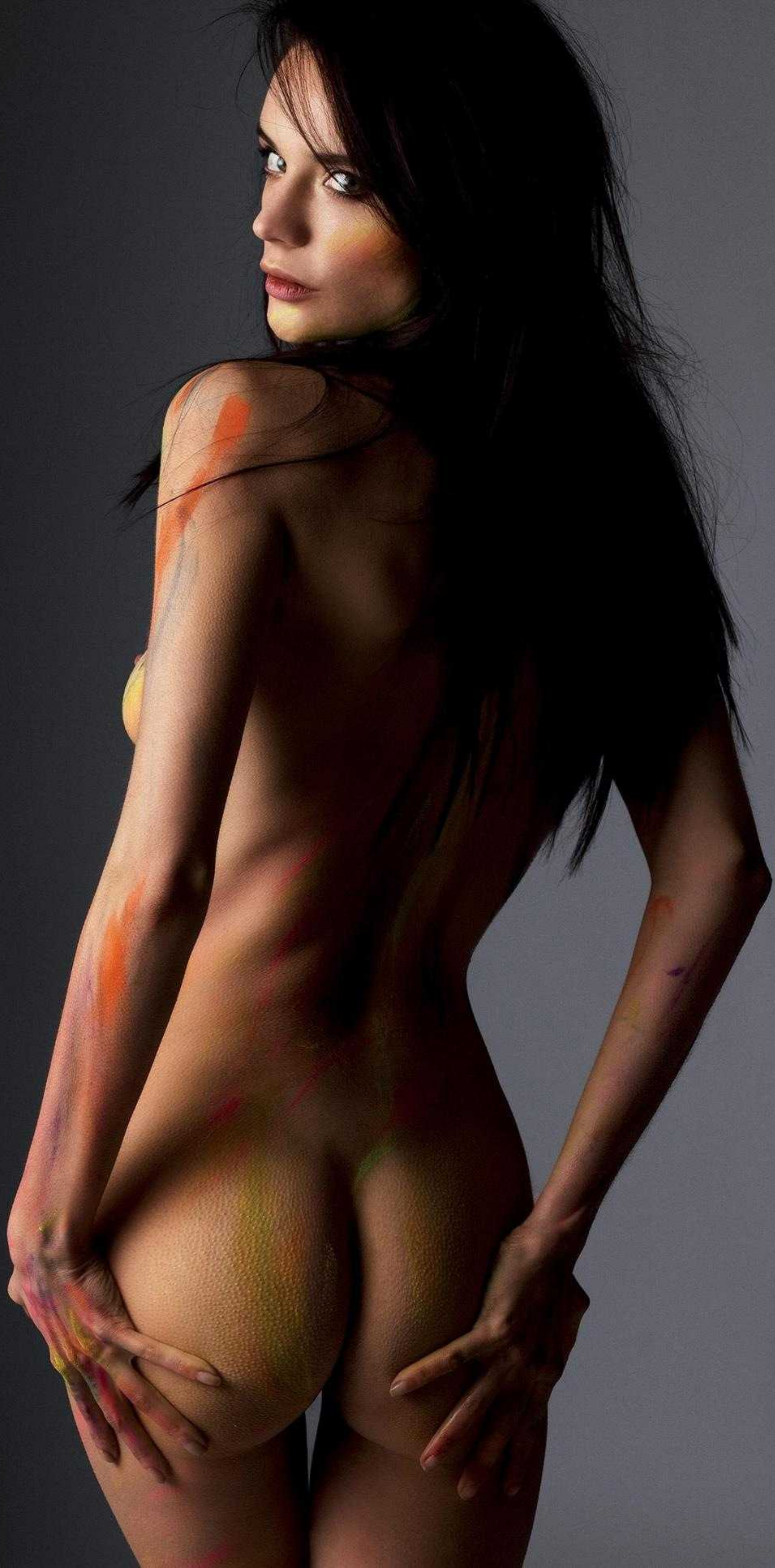
*As an international model and a gold medalist in the sport of rhythmic gymnastics, **Kira Dikhtyar** is both an artist and an athlete—a stunning champion of balance, poise, dexterity and dance. Here, as a blank canvas brushed with soft strokes of lambent color, this Moscow-born beauty is even more of a perfect 10*

Artist in Rhythm

Photography by VICTORIA JANASHVILI















On December 2, 2014, William Trubridge, then

34, floated into the competition zone above Dean's Blue Hole, a purpling cove off rustic Long Island, Bahamas, prepared to dive to 102 meters without fins to break a world record.

With a foam noodle supporting his neck and another beneath his knees, his wife, Brit-tany, towed him into position while one of three judges decked out in bright yellow rash guards clipped him onto a rope that disappeared into the deep darkness below. The rope was there to measure depth, but it was also a lifeline.

If Trubridge were to lose consciousness at a depth the safety divers couldn't reach, officials could pull him back to the surface before it was too late. Trubridge didn't anticipate such an emergency. Dean's Blue Hole was his home court, after all, and Long Island was his home. He'd been training for that moment, in that hole, for months. Then again, nobody had ever tried to swim to 102 meters on one breath without fins.

Splayed like a twisted egg noodle between the frothing Atlantic Ocean

and the placid Caribbean Sea, Long Island's stubby limestone hills and plains are blanketed in thick tropical scrub rustling with wild boar and feral cats and fringed with exquisite white-sand beaches. It also has some history. Long Island was the third stop on Christopher Columbus's signature voyage. Yet despite the fact that competitive events had been held for half a century, Dean's wasn't even on the free-diving map until Trubridge established the first of his 15 world records there in 2007.

Trubridge was raised on a sailboat. He and his brother Sam would entertain themselves by diving for shells in whichever Polynesian port his parents happened to dock in, until high school and university in New Zealand intervened. Never a competitive athlete, he seemed destined for a life of the mind when he got a gig as a genetic engineer in a top Auckland laboratory, but the sterility bored him, so he ditched his lab coat, grabbed a backpack and went traveling. He landed in London, where he worked in a hotel and rented a flat with a good friend who had just returned from Thailand. He regaled Trubridge with stories



GOING DEEP

BY ADAM SKOLNICK

How far beneath the sea can man go on a single breath of air? A small, determined group of athletes risks all in the relentless pursuit to find out. Inside the perilous, marvelous world of competitive free diving

"AT THE SURFACE YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT YOU MIGHT DIE," SAYS ONE CHAMPION FREE DIVER. "YOU MUST HAVE NO FEAR."



1



2



3

Previous page: William Trubridge on his way to depth. This page: 1. Accompanied by safety divers, Alexey Molchanov ascends Dean's Blue Hole in the Bahamas. 2. After the successful completion of his dive Molchanov receives a white tag. 3. Halfway to a record, Sofia Gomez Uribe grabs a tag from the bottom plate.

of free divers he saw seemingly defy human physiology and dive far deeper than scuba divers off Ko Tao.

Trubridge was intrigued. He researched online and learned that free diving wasn't just about underwater exploration but was also a competitive sport. During depth competitions, he learned, athletes compete in three main disciplines: constant weight (in which divers dolphin-kick to depth wearing a monofin); free immersion (in which athletes pull themselves along a line to depth, then back to the surface, without fins); and, most difficult of all, constant no fins (in which competitors dive using a modified breaststroke, without fins).

Trubridge flashed to those early days underwater, shut off the computer and began to practice dry breath holds on his bed. But he knew he'd need to get back to the tropics to see if he had what it took to be a competitive free diver. He quit his job and traveled to the Bay Islands in Honduras, where he spent weeks lengthening his breath hold and

diving deep. Next, he drifted to Sardinia to train with Italian free-diving legend Umberto Pelizzari. Trubridge began to compete, but a lack of accessible dive sites with consistent conditions hampered his performance. Then, in 2005, he found Dean's Blue Hole.

An underwater cavern flipped vertically to a depth of 202 meters, it's sheltered by 15-meter limestone bluffs and is just three steps from a spectacular white-sand beach. Conditions are hard to beat. Within a few years, so was Trubridge. The first time he broke a world record, the free-diving community took notice and began to travel to Long Island to train and compete alongside him. Most of the divers arrive in the

Bahamas just before the Vertical Blue competition, the Wimbledon of free diving, an event Trubridge owns and typically dominates. His stirring performances at Dean's Blue Hole, with records and medals on the line, are the main reason Trubridge is considered the best free diver alive.

Yet, by the time he clipped onto the line last December, his position at the top was tenuous. Vertical Blue 2014 drew national record holders from 19 countries. Among them was Alexey Molchanov, then 27, a Russian swim prodigy turned free diver who was already the deepest man in the sport. In September 2013 he dived to 128 meters, covering a distance greater than the height of an 80-story building and breaking his own world record in constant weight. Trubridge still owned the free-immersion world record at 121 meters and the constant-no-fins record at 101 meters, swimming a distance greater than two football fields, without fins. Yet Molchanov beat Trubridge for an overall competition title for the first time last May at the Caribbean Cup and went on to lead the Russian men to team gold at the world championships. By (continued on page 110)



"Well, I may be expensive, honey, but remember—I've got my very own frequent flier program!"



BAR GUIDE

2015

JUST DRINK

DON'T OVERTHINK IT

WE'RE OFFICIALLY OVER THE PRE-PROHIBITION-DRINKS SHTICK, AND SO ARE AMERICA'S BEST BARTENDERS. LET US RAISE A GLASS TO THE SIMPLER, SMARTER COCKTAIL

By Alia Akkam

Photography by Joseph Shin

Machete in Space

Tecate & 86 Co.
Tequila Cabeza



"The bright acidity and crisp finish of Tecate pair beautifully with the citrus and coriander notes of a good tequila. Cerveza and tequila are a timeless combination."

—ERICK CASTRO

Grow a Pair

POP A TOP, TAKE A SHOT. IT'S TOUGH TO IMPROVE ON A SHOT AND A BEER

► Sipping a shot of booze alongside a beer is a seemingly simple pastime, but the combo—making waves at bars across the country—actually creates alluringly complex

flavors. We tapped shot-and-beer specialist Erick Castro, bartender at Boilermaker in New York's East Village, to give us five perfect pairs, from the classic to the clever.

PERFECT PAIRS



Smoked Fruit

Del Maguey Vida
Mezcal & Liefmans
Fruitesse

Robustly smoky mezcal is tempered by a cherry-forward Belgian fruit beer.



National Anthem

Brooklyn Lager &
Old Weller Antique
Bourbon

Slightly bitter amber lager finds synergy with the subtle sweetness of wheated bourbon.



Apples and Vanilla

Doc's Cider &
Angostura 1919 Rum

Fruity, dry cider lends a crisp backbone to the rum's warm vanilla notes.



Not Exactly a Paloma

Stiegl Radler & Siete
Leguas Blanco Tequila

Citrus-forward tequila paired with grapefruit-spiked beer is essentially a deconstructed paloma cocktail.

The 1980s Are Back

JUST BECAUSE THE DRINKS SUCKED BACK THEN DOESN'T MEAN THEY CAN'T BE AWESOME NOW

► They simply didn't know better. In the 1970s and 1980s—the height of careless bars churning out much-maligned cocktails—imbibers absentmindedly sipped the sweet sludge they were served and asked no questions about the unbalanced concoctions filling their glasses. In the midst of today's classic-cocktail renaissance, such a shoddy approach to drink-slinging just won't fly. Now, with only quality on their minds, some enthusiastic barkeeps have decided to give these once-bastardized libations an upgrade.

Amaretto Sour

By [Jeffrey Morgenthaler](#),
[Pépé le Moko, Portland](#)

Jeffrey Morgenthaler decided it was time to give new life to that cloying 1970s go-to, the amaretto sour. In this rendition, served at his speakeasy, he shuns the sweet-and-sour mix for lemon juice and amps it up with bourbon and egg whites.

1/2 oz. egg whites, lightly beaten
3/4 oz. Booker's over-proof bourbon
1 oz. fresh lemon juice
1 1/2 oz. amaretto
2 tsp. simple syrup

Shake ingredients with ice cubes until well chilled; strain into an old-fashioned glass filled with ice. Garnish with lemon peel and a brandied cherry.

Long Island Iced Tea

By [Mike Criss](#), the
[Nightingale Room](#),
[Houston](#)

At Mike Criss and Bobby Heugel's Nightingale Room, one of the featured drinks is the Long Island iced tea, a throwback to Criss's club-bartending days. This version

of the often reviled multispirit cocktail is fresh and satisfying.

1/2 oz. each Old Tom gin, *rum agricole*, tequila blanco and simple syrup
1 oz. fresh lemon juice
Top with Mexican Coke

Pour ingredients into a collins glass filled with ice and stir to combine.

Piña Colada

By [Chad Solomon](#),
[Midnight Rambler, Dallas](#)

Fresh juices and good rums upgrade the classic.

1/2 oz. each fresh lime juice, coconut milk, *rum agricole blanc*
1 oz. Wray & Nephew overproof rum
1 1/4 oz. coconut cream
1 1/2 oz. fresh pineapple juice
3 drops mineral saline (1 tbsp. salt dissolved in 4 oz. water)

Combine ingredients in a shaker and shake without ice. Pour into a 16-ounce hurricane glass filled with crushed ice. Stir to dilute, top with more ice and garnish with pineapple wedge and freshly grated nutmeg.



“Our piña colada takes the classic and punches it up with fresh juice, funkier and fruitier *rum agricole* and Jamaican pot-still rum, plus salt, fat and acid.”

—CHAD SOLOMON

A Better Basic Bar

STEP ASIDE, MUSTACHIOED MIXOLOGIST, AND JUST GIVE US A DRINK

► The posh, tin-ceilinged speakeasy will always hold a special place in the hearts of drink aficionados. But it's time for the pretense-free casual bar, where cocktails and beer are relished in equal measure, to take over the spotlight. Here are five newish laid-back lairs in which to tie one on.

CHICAGO

1. Lost Lake

• Tiki guru Paul McGee's {1} Logan Square hot spot, Lost Lake, is a chill, tropical reprieve where drinks can be sipped out of conch shells. Mongolian beef takeout, deliv-



ered straight to the table, makes it even easier to settle in with a vintage Don the Beachcomber mystery gardenia cocktail.

LOS ANGELES

2. The Normandie Club

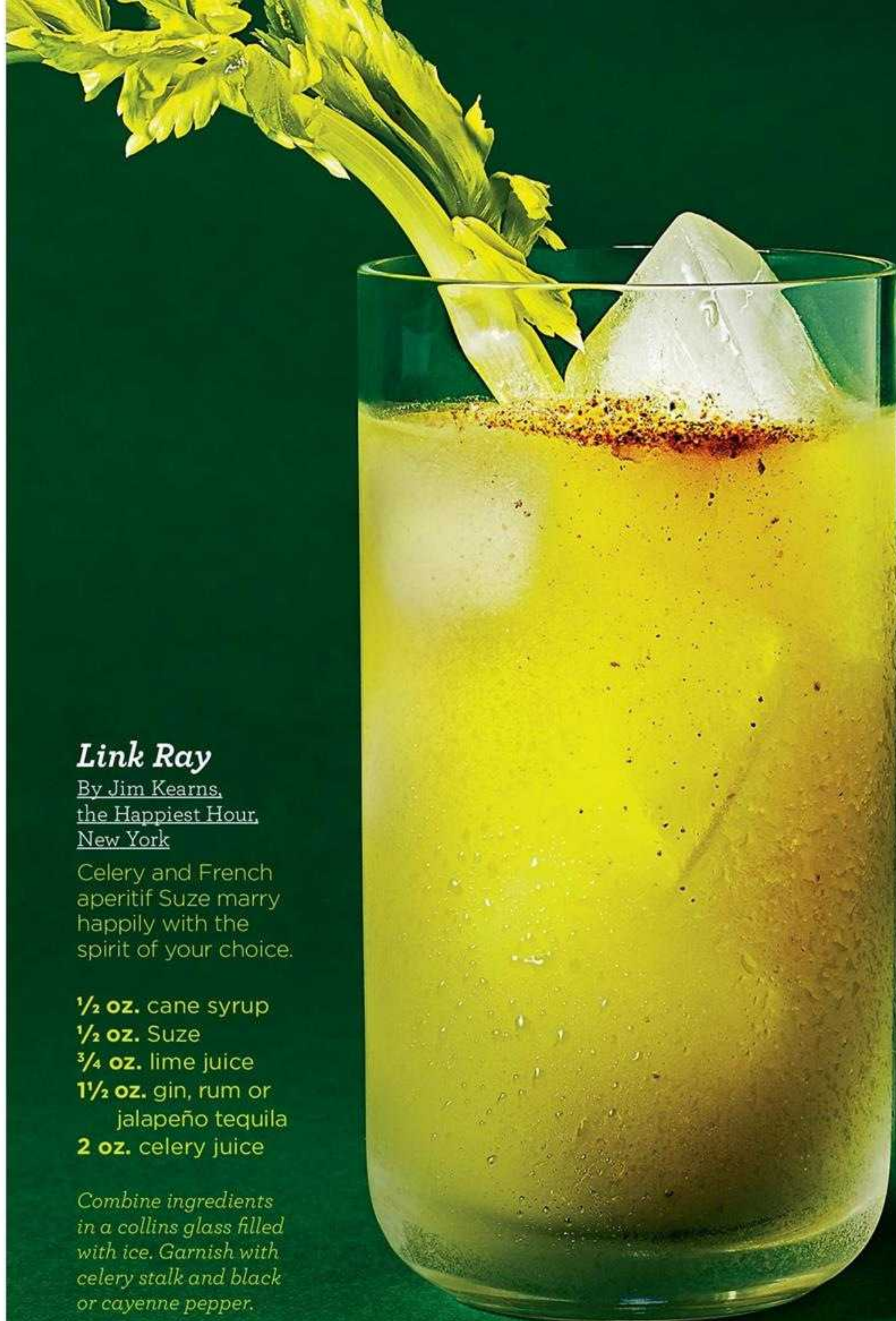
• On-the-rise Koreatown is now home to the Normandie

Club, a collaboration between cocktail hit-makers 213 Hospitality and Proprietors LLC. Inventive riffs on the classics are this bar's stock-in-trade, so expect a tequila collins with pear brandy and an old fashioned with coconut bourbon.

HOUSTON

3. The Nightingale Room

• A barrage of vinyl sets a low-key tone at the Nightingale Room {2}, the downtown den from Mike Criss and Bobby Heugel. Dancing erupts here on the regular, fueled by old



Link Ray

By Jim Kearns,
the Happiest Hour,
New York

Celery and French aperitif Suze marry happily with the spirit of your choice.

1/2 oz. cane syrup
1/2 oz. Suze
3/4 oz. lime juice
1 1/2 oz. gin, rum or jalapeño tequila
2 oz. celery juice

Combine ingredients in a collins glass filled with ice. Garnish with celery stalk and black or cayenne pepper.

fashioneds that flaunt cognac and clever shots like the Mexican razor blade, made with tequila, lemon and cayenne.

SAN FRANCISCO

4. ABV

• The cocktail list at ABV, the Mission lair from a trifecta of



all-star bartenders (Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud, Ryan

Fitzgerald, Todd Smith), is arranged by spirit. One fitting, goes-down-easy summer quaff: the sutro swizzle, a mélange of Armagnac, lemon juice, grapefruit shrub, maraschino and Angostura bitters on crushed ice.

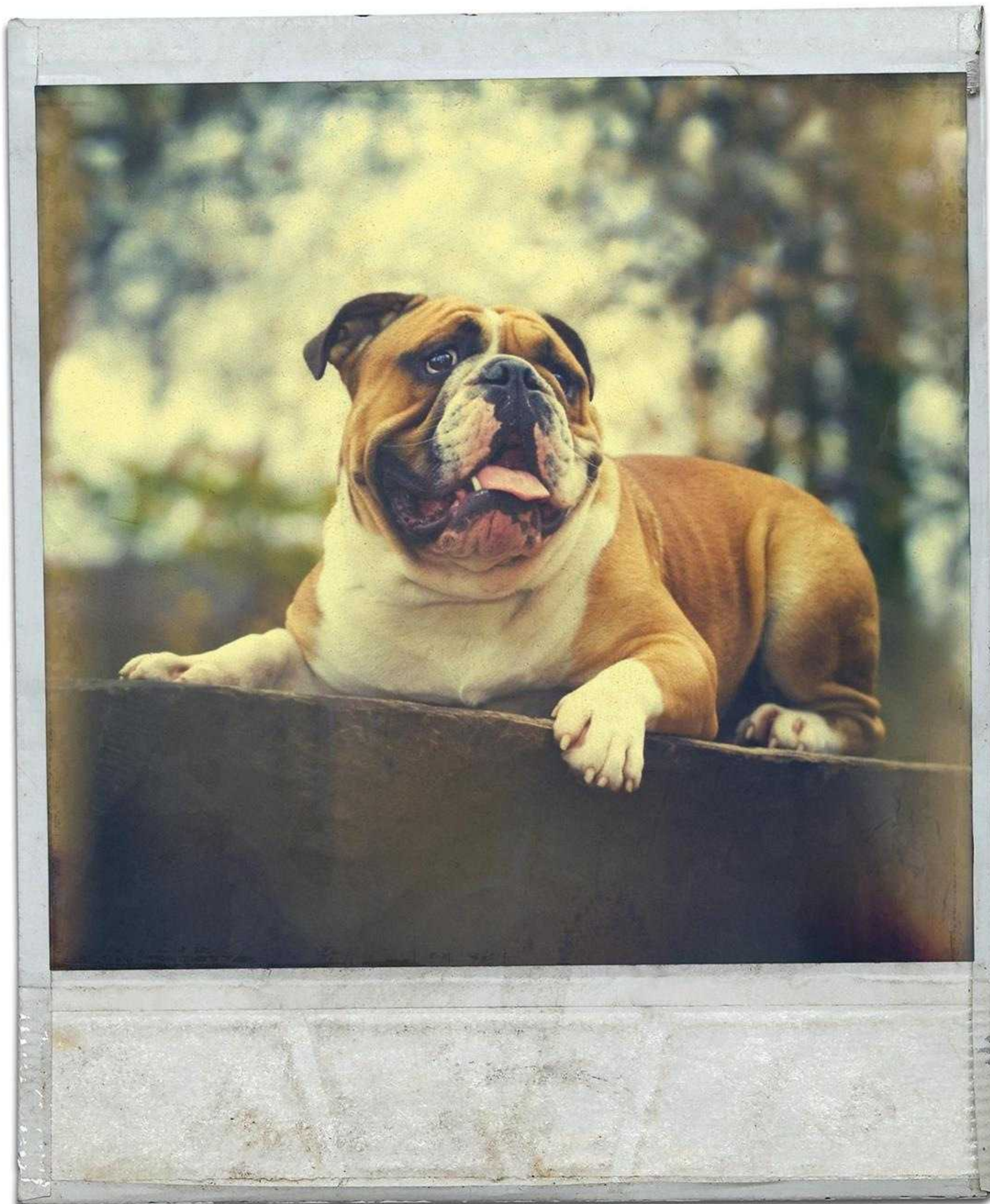
NEW YORK

5. The Happiest Hour

• At the vintage-resort-inspired Happiest Hour {3} in the West Village, there's so much freedom, guests decide which spirit they'd like their drinks to showcase. Head bartender Jim Kearns's link ray cocktail, with bitter Suze and lime and celery juices, goes especially well with jalapeño tequila. ■



"People have learned a good drink doesn't have to be a precious thing. At the end of the day, it's about being able to get quality drinks in a watering hole." —JIM KEARNS



Odin

Latham had one friend left in the world,
and now he's dead

FICTION BY TED COHEN

I normally don't answer the phone when I'm uploading a picture of my cock to the internet, but it was Jess, and she had taken Zack out of state.
"Speaking," I said.
"Why do you answer the phone like that?"
"Are you calling principally to question my phone etiquette? Because I know plenty of other women who can do that who I still get to fuck."
"Odin died."

I watched the picture come up bar by bar: the pecs with their breasty shadows, the taut overhang of the belly positioned to obscure my face and finally the cock itself, the undampable springing leftness of it, the tragic, gut-punch tapering, like a Nike Swoosh on a set of angry pink razor-burned balls.

Delete, man. Fucking deee-leet.

"Latham?"

"When?"

"I'm not sure. He was asleep this morning when JP left for work, and then when he got home Frank was barking like crazy and led him into our room——"

Our room.

"—and he was under the bed."

"Did you tell Zack yet?"

"No. Betsy and I took the kids to Legoland today, and he's so happy. I'll do it tomorrow."

Betsy was Jess's high school friend. She had spoken at our wedding and then been the architect of my demise. She lived in San Diego now with Mike and their kids, on a street that ends in the ocean. At the corner of Via de la Paz or some such shit and the petering sand grains of America.

"JP's waiting for you at the house."

"I'll be there in 10 minutes." And then, instead of hanging up, "Can I say hi to Zack?"

Pause. "Okay."

I heard her walk into the other room, then him rabbiting around with Harlan and Juno, the hysterical pitch of it, laughter (continued on page 124)



— RETRO FIT —

FORGET A FANCY NIGHT OUT ON THE TOWN. IF YOU WANT TO IMPRESS THE FABULOUSLY PHYSICAL MISS JUNE, YOU'LL NEED TO WORK UP A SWEAT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SASHA EISENMAN

For Miss June Kaylia Cassandra, feeling sexy is all about having a healthy mind, body and spirit. Her mission in life is to be her best self, which means greeting every morning with a smile ("Positive thoughts breed positive outcomes," she says) and working out up to six times a week to maintain her killer body. "Being fit is definitely part of being the best possible me," says the aspiring medical assistant. "It's not only the way my body looks but how it feels on the inside. We have only one body, so I take care of and love mine." Outside the gym, Kaylia enjoys watching Minnesota Vikings football, snowboarding, hiking, walking her Labrador puppy and spending quiet nights at home. "A glass of red wine, sitting on a sofa and being comfortable—there's something very appealing and sexy about that," she says, alluding to the inspiration behind her 1960s-themed PLAYBOY pictorial. "Maybe it's because I appreciate modesty. As a small-town girl, I'd rather be cute and comfortable than try to impress other people," she says. "The only person I ever compete with is myself."







MISS JUNE

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH

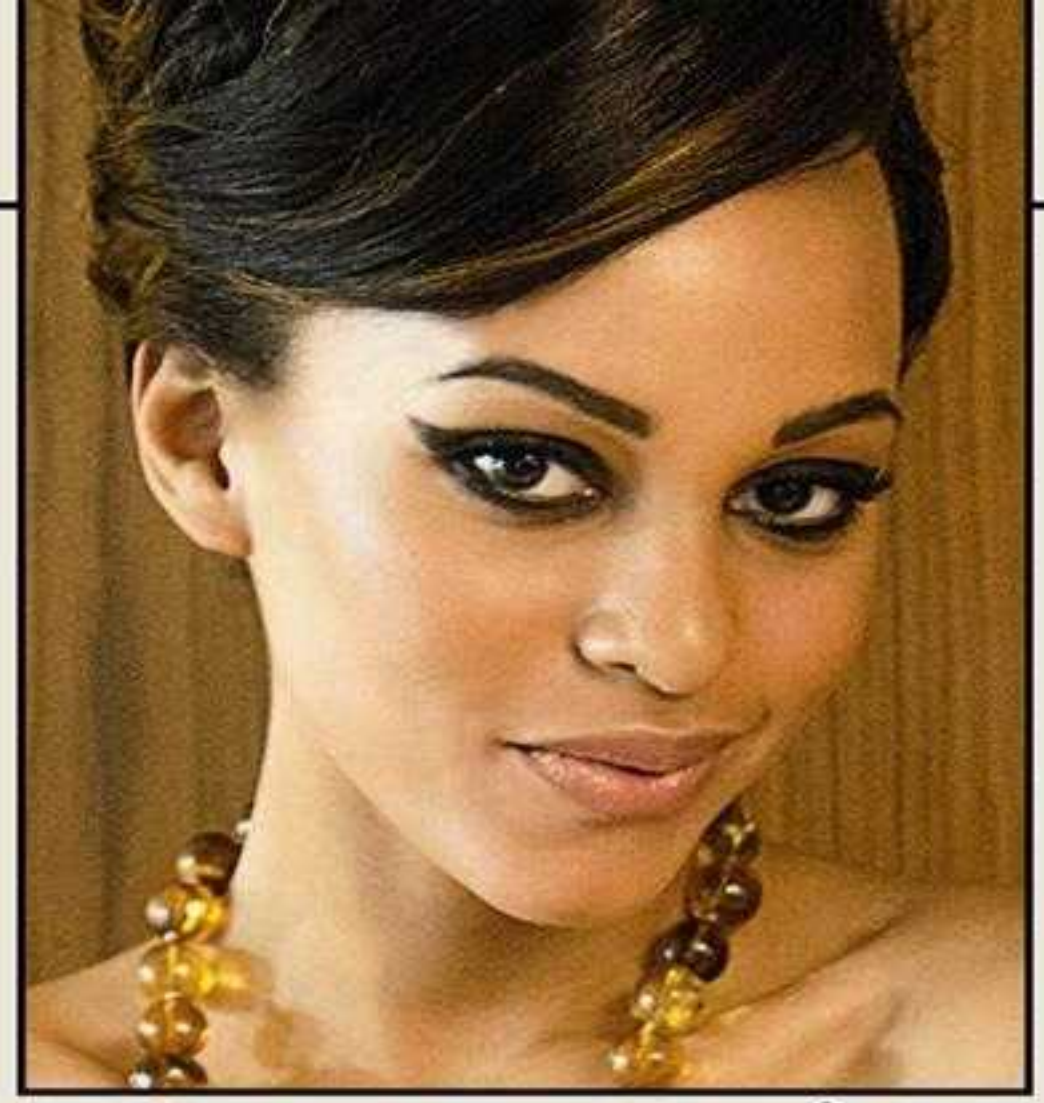






Kaoufia Cassamatta

PLAYMATE DATA SHEET



NAME: Kaylia Cassandra

BUST: 32 B WAIST: 25" HIPS: 34"

HEIGHT: 5' 6" WEIGHT: 117 lbs.

BIRTH DATE: 3-23-90 BIRTHPLACE: Grand Forks, ND

AMBITIONS: One day I hope everyone will know my name. (It's pronounced KAY-la.)

TURN-ONS: Older men, athletic nerds and men who remain humble despite success.

TURNOFFS: I really don't like men who believe they are God's gift to women.

THE LOVE OF MY LIFE: Ryder, my charcoal Lab. She's just like me: pretty but easygoing.

GUILTY PLEASURE: General Hospital! shout-out to my favorite actor, Jason Thompson. I also enjoy cereal, but please, not too much milk!

MY ADVICE: Ladies, embrace your body. Be a better you! #FitIsSexy.



Inner nerd.



Biker babe.



Vegas, baby.



STYLING BY JENNIFER HERREMA, MAKEUP BY ERIN LEE SMITH AT ATELIER MANAGEMENT;
HAIR BY TONY VIN; PROP STYLING BY CYDNEY GRIGGS CULLEN

PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

The idea of "ladies first" was obviously invented by a guy who wanted to check out women's asses.

How can you make a neat freak scream?
After you fuck her, wipe your dick on her bedroom curtains.

A man walked into a library and whispered to the librarian, "Do you have a book on small penises?"

"I don't think it's in yet," she answered.

He replied, "Yes, that's the one."

When you get married, S&M night turns into her sleeping while you masturbate.



A new survey found that Chipotle is the most popular restaurant to take a first date. It's also one of the most popular places to break up if the man is still taking the girl to Chipotle on their third date.

If a guy remembers the color of his date's eyes after their first encounter, chances are she has small boobs.

Where did you get that Rolex?" a man asked his co-worker.

"My lesbian neighbors gave it to me for my birthday," the co-worker said. "They asked me what I wanted, but they misunderstood when I told them, 'I wanna watch.'"

An elderly man was out for a drive when he received a phone call from his wife. "Dear, be careful," she said. "I just heard on the radio that one idiot out there is driving the wrong way on the highway."

"Are you kidding me?" he said. "There are hundreds of them!"

To bimbos, men are like bank accounts: Unless they have a lot of money, they don't generate much interest.

A girl asked her mother, "Where did you and Daddy meet?"

"At a picnic," the mother answered.

"Did I go there with you?" the girl asked.

The mother answered, "No, sweetheart, but you were with me on the way back."

What's the difference between a bitch and a whore?

A whore sleeps with everybody at the party, and a bitch sleeps with everybody at the party except you.

Why did the prostitute look into getting a second vagina implanted in her hip?

She wanted to do a little work on the side.

How is being in the military like getting a blow job?

The closer you get to discharge, the better you feel.

What goes in hard and dry but comes out soft and wet?

Chewing gum.

What's the difference between the G-spot and a golf ball?

Men will spend more time looking for a golf ball.

Senator," an aide called, "there's someone on the phone who wants to know what you plan to do about the abortion bill."

He responded, "Tell them I'll have a check in the mail by the morning."



A man was admitted to the hospital with a horrendous sunburn all over his body. "Rub aloe vera on his skin, give him an IV drip to maintain his hydration and have him swallow a Viagra," the doctor told a nurse.

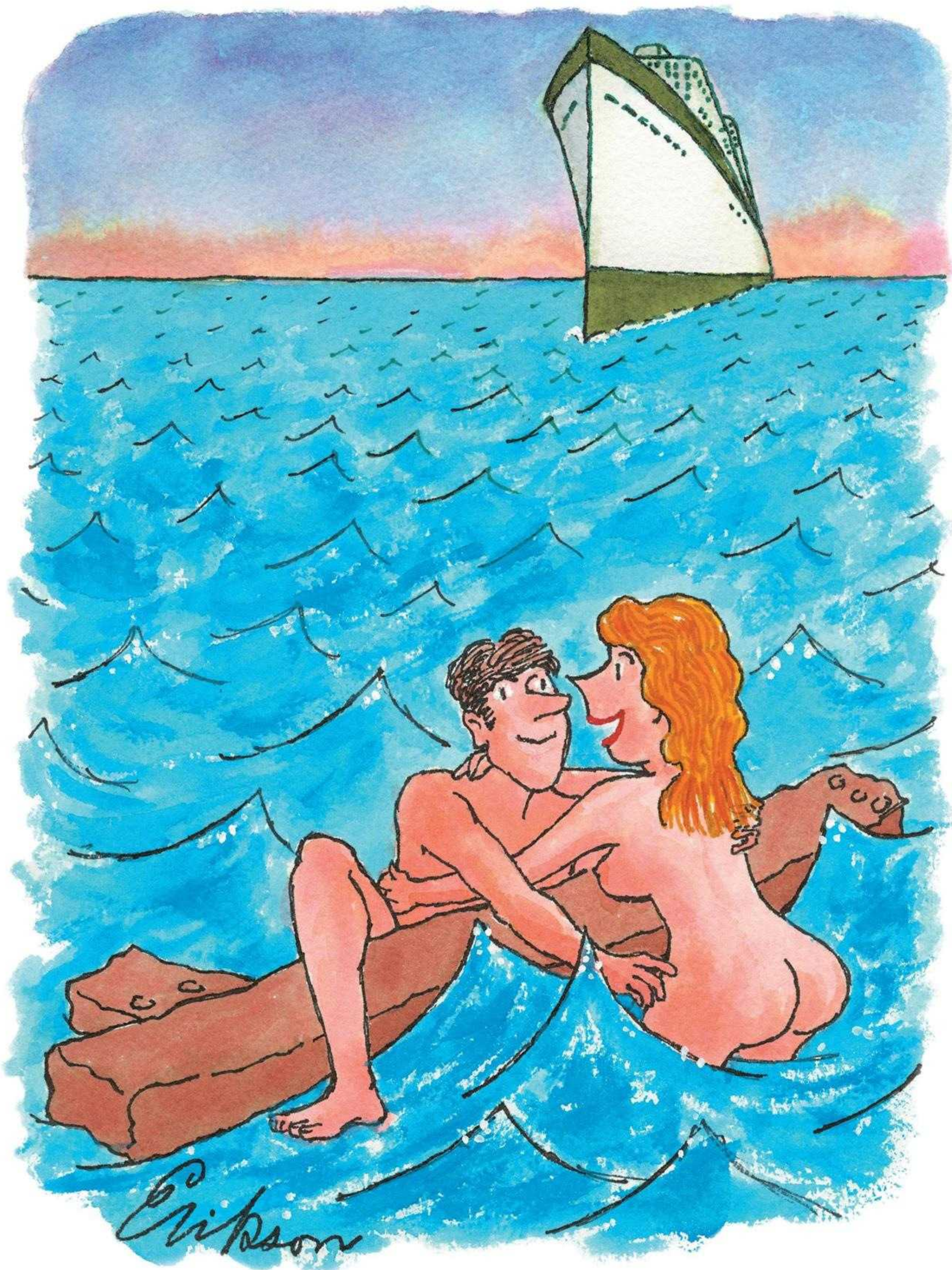
"But why Viagra?" the nurse asked.

The doctor answered, "It will keep the sheets off his thighs and stomach."

Dear Playboy Advisor: My wife says I don't use enough lubricant before we have sex. Exactly how many beers am I supposed to drink before I bed her?

One of the little-known side effects of Viagra is a headache. Often when a husband takes the pill, his wife gets a headache.

Send your jokes to Playboy Party Jokes, 9346 Civic Center Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210, or by e-mail to jokes@playboy.com.



"What say we put this off until we get rescued?"

**NO
SEX,
PLEASE, WE'RE
JAPANESE**

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON
(OR NOT GOING ON) IN JAPAN?
AND IS IT SPREADING?

~~~~~  
*By*  
NEAL GABLER





It was a fairly typical adolescent story. He was the new kid, a sophomore transfer student at Towano High School in Japan. It took him a while to acclimate, but he eventually met three beautiful female classmates, each with soulful dark eyes and distinct personality quirks. Manaka was cute, innocent, effervescent and athletic, a fellow member of the school's tennis team. Rinko, who worked on the school library committee with him, was stand-offish at first, even brusque, someone you had to get to know before she would let down her guard. Nene, whom he met at his after-school job where she also worked, was a year older and a bit more experienced—a sensitive soul.

Over the school year, he continually ran into all three, and he began dating each, getting to know their demons in the process. Manaka felt alienated and alone. Rinko had to struggle with a new step-mother. Nene provided comfort to everyone but found little solace herself. So he talked to them, comforted them, helped them and, not incidentally, racked up points with them. Sometimes it was difficult juggling the relationships. They would call him at the same time or want to see him at the same place. What made it even more difficult was that the girls were so eager to please him that they would ask him what he preferred and then try to conform—in their clothes, their hairstyles, their personalities.

Eventually, he settled on Rinko, and she on him, and thus began a whirlwind of dates, gifts, selfies, chats, e-mails, compliments and sweet murmurs of “I love you,” which she once asked him to repeat publicly a hundred times. Meanwhile, she provided support, encouragement and her own professions of love. Then came the PDA and Rinko flaunting herself in a bikini and the boy gently touching her, as teenage boys are wont to do. And then...nothing. The affection never progressed to sex, and there was a good reason it didn't: Manaka, Nene and Rinko weren't real girls. They were digital cartoons in a dating-simulation game called *Love Plus: The romantic high school sophomore* was an avatar.

*Love Plus* was released by the Japanese game maker Konami in 2009 for the Nintendo DS gaming





system, and it immediately became the most popular dating simulation in the country; it has sold more than 600,000 copies in its five years on the market. As one reviewer put it, the game was “designed with addiction in mind.” According to one report, the first thing some male players do each day is check their in-box for e-mails from their digital girls. Wives complain that the game pulls their husbands away from them and disrupts their families. One aggrieved wife said of her husband, “He’s always chatting with a virtual girl through the screen, as though he were dating her. As his wife, I can’t stand it anymore.” And worse, because it is DS, it is portable—even more portable with the addition of phone apps—which permitted Konami to organize a holiday weekend in the beach town of Atami where players could take their “girlfriends” for a getaway. In fact, some men are drawn so deeply into their virtual romances that the game has an SOS button for occasions when the player may feel suicidal. Tap it and the girl will try to buck up your spirits. But you can use it only once per game.

Clearly, many players treat it as if it were life, not a game. According to one review, *Love Plus* is “about a fully fledged relationship between two loving people.” And therein lies a problem—a big problem. Fewer and fewer Japanese men seem to be having sex with real women, so much so that the press has labeled the phenomenon the “celibacy syndrome.”

Get ready for some heavy statistics. The Japan Family Planning Association conducted a survey in 2014 of 3,000 men and women and found that 48.3 percent of the men and 50.1 percent of the women had not had sex in the past month—up roughly five percent from a study conducted two years earlier. More than 20 percent of men between the ages of 25 and 29 expressed little or no interest in sex, while 45 percent of women from 16 to 24 admitted they were “not interested in or despised sexual contact.” In another survey, 23.8 percent of women called sex “bothersome.” Yet another survey found that 61 percent of men and 49 percent of women age 18 to 34 were not in any romantic relationship and that 30 percent of men in their 20s and 30s had no dating experience whatsoever. Yet *another* study revealed that 36.7 percent of men had not had sex for more than three years. Among men between the ages of 40 and 59, 60 percent said they could be considered sexless.

Why so many studies? Because Japan is not just having a sex crisis. It’s having a birthrate crisis—this in a country where the birthrate was already lower than that of most industrialized nations. If the current trend continues, Japan’s population will shrink by a third by 2060. No sex, no babies, no growth. It’s one of the most bruited-about issues in that nation.

And it isn’t only about population growth. Sexual frequency is directly correlated to higher levels of happiness. In fact, a study by the Well-Being Program at the London School of Economics’ Center for Economic Performance showed lovemaking as the highest-rated activity in contributing to individual happiness. As Japan’s

population is declining, so apparently is its sense of joy. And be forewarned. Some evidence suggests that in this, as in many other areas, Japan may simply have already arrived where other nations, including the United States, are headed. There can obviously be no such thing as a “post-sexual” world or there wouldn’t be any world at all. Still, something seems to be happening to our libidos. Which raises two burning questions: What’s going on? And is Japan’s sexless present our future?

●

To answer those questions, it helps to play detective and find out exactly who stole Japanese sex. The Japanese themselves often accuse a generation of disaffected young men who have abandoned traditional masculine roles. Some of these are *hikikomori*, the equivalent of the American adult male who lives in his parents’ basement. These are withdrawn souls who seldom emerge from their hermitage. But as suspects go, this group hasn’t forsworn sex. They never had sex to begin with.

A more likely group of suspects is the “failed men” or “effeminate men” or, more colorfully, the “herbivores,” a term coined by Japanese writer Maki Fukasawa to describe androgynous young Japanese who actively eschew any sex, heterosexual or homosexual, or at the very least don’t prioritize it, as opposed to carnivores, who do. According to one study, nearly half of Japanese men between the ages of 20 and 34 identified themselves as herbivores, even though many of them explicitly said they were heterosexual. By one account, given the option, they preferred buying an expensive rice cooker over more traditional male accoutrements, liked hosting dessert-tasting clubs and enjoyed getting spa treatments.

But if you’re looking for the single largest subculture of sexual abstainers and the group most often charged with sexual diminution, go to Akihabara, a district in lower Tokyo that was once the appliance center of the city, then the computer and technology center, and is now the manga (comic book) and anime (animation) center, where store after store after store sells pictures and objects related to comics and animation. Basically, Akihabara is geek city, and its inhabitants are known as *otaku*. According to Patrick Galbraith, an *otaku* scholar and author of *Debating Otaku in Contemporary Japan*, the term arose in

the 1980s to describe young men and women who were intense fans of one particular thing but who were also “lacking in social common sense,” which is to say they didn’t navigate the social world very well. In America, for example, Twilighters, who are fans of the *Twilight* series, or Gleeks, who are obsessed with the TV show *Glee*, would be *otaku*. In Japan, *otaku* were especially fixated on manga, anime and computer and video games.

How fixated? Well, as Galbraith says, over time they became *very* fixated. Throughout the 1980s, *otaku* became emotionally and sexually invested in what are known in Japan as *bishojo*, or “cute girls,” those big-eyed, pert-nosed, round cartoon girls you often see in anime. In fact, some *otaku* had become so invested that *Manga Burikko*, a magazine that catered to *otaku*, drew readers’ protests for including nude photos of real-life girls alongside cartoon nudes. Many readers demanded erotic *bishojo* only.

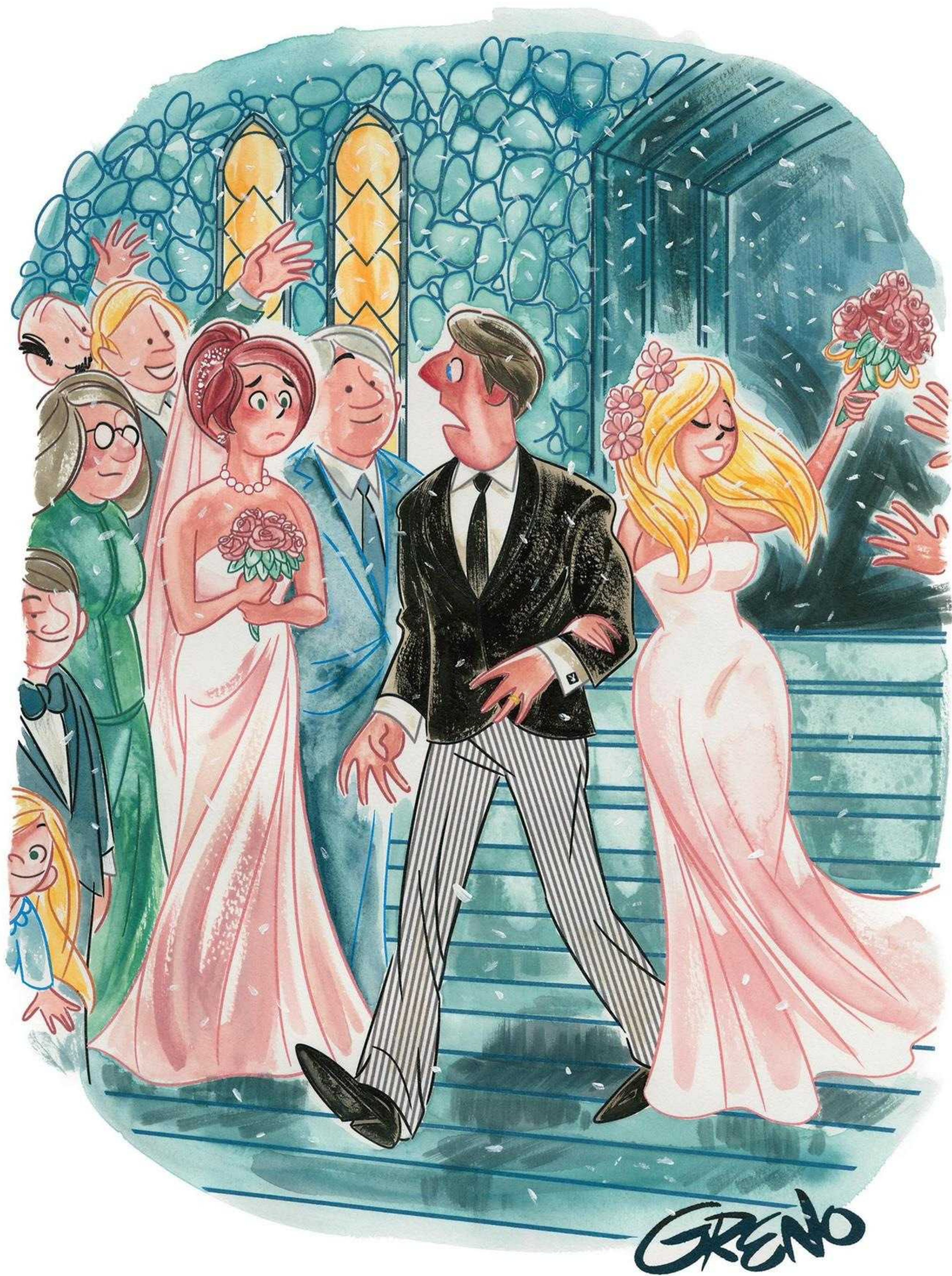
If that sounds weird to us, and it should, it sounded equally weird to most Japanese. (continued on page 119)



**JAPAN IS  
NOT JUST  
HAVING  
A SEX  
CRISIS. IT'S  
HAVING A  
BIRTH-  
RATE  
CRISIS.**







*"Didn't you get my text?"*







Photography by  
MATT HOYLE

By  
ROB  
TANNENBAUM

# Charlie GASPARINO

*THE FOX BUSINESS NETWORK'S CHIEF RABBLE-ROUSER  
HAS SOME ADVICE FOR YOU: DON'T HIRE A BROKER,  
DON'T WATCH CNBC AND DON'T SEND HIM MEAN TWEETS*

## Q1

**PLAYBOY:** As a senior correspondent for Fox Business Network and author of five intensely detailed books about Wall Street, you spend your days on the phone with people who work in finance, and a lot of your nights in bars with them. What do you like about these people?

**GASPARINO:** That's a good question. There's an attraction, like the attraction to the devil in *Paradise Lost*. Wall Street is a cesspool. I write about some of the good stuff. I often write about the bad stuff. In order to get that bad stuff, you have to mingle with the people who know what's going on. Wall Street guys are type-A personalities. They're a little crazy, they're profane, they're smart. And their world fascinates me.

## Q2

**PLAYBOY:** You just drew a parallel between bankers and Satan. How much evil is there in finance?

**GASPARINO:** I've been covering Wall Street since 1990. I remember going to my old boss Bob Greene, who was the investigative editor at *Newsday* and won Pulitzers for covering organized crime. I said, "How come you don't do more Wall Street reporting?" He said, "I like doing the Mob." I said, "Wall Street is the real Mob." That doesn't mean they're all bad guys, but there is an evil side to them that needs to be exposed. And Wall Street guys love to talk about their business. Do they fess up to doing bad stuff? After a few drinks, some of them do. Usually they fess up about someone else, and that's where you get your stories.



WALL STREET IS  
THE REAL MOB.  
THAT DOESN'T  
MEAN THEY'RE  
ALL BAD, BUT  
THERE IS AN EVIL  
SIDE THAT NEEDS  
TO BE EXPOSED.



**Q3**

**PLAYBOY:** So buying a few rounds of drinks for your sources is part of your reporting process?

**GASPARINO:** I can't drink like I used to, but I can drink a lot and not be drunk. I can put them down, and in the context of putting them down, I can report and get stuff out of people—usually on the second round. In terms of drinking, the financial crisis was rough. I was drinking at two A.M. once and went on the air at 6:30. I wasn't buzzed; I was hungover, if anything. People were drinking to soothe their sorrows, because we were imagining bread lines.

**Q4**

**PLAYBOY:** How do you feel about the way Wall Street guys are depicted in the media? For the past few decades people have viewed them as rock stars, no?

**GASPARINO:** I remember in the 1990s how revered Wall Street was. If you watch *Sex and the City*, the big catch for one of the girls is some guy on Wall Street. The zeitgeist has changed. Now Wall Street is demonized and attacked in popular culture. Don't get me wrong; they're still making money, but the perception is different, and rightly so. I think the public hates them.

**Q5**

**PLAYBOY:** Given your distrust of Wall Street, what do you tell people who are just getting started as investors?

**GASPARINO:** If you're 30 years old, the biggest thing you should be doing is saving and dividing the money into a stock portfolio. You don't necessarily need a broker to do that, by the way. Open a Charles Schwab account. If you put your money in an S&P 500 fund a couple of months after Tim Geithner became Treasury secretary for Barack Obama, you made a lot of money. When you start accumulating assets, having a broker isn't a bad thing. People tend to believe anything their broker says about tech stocks, but they tend not to believe everything a used car salesman says about a car. You need to understand the markets, because your broker has an agenda. There's a good chance he'll try to sell you some shit. If you understand that, you'll be okay. By the way, you can't get a real broker right now unless you have about \$500,000.

**Q6**

**PLAYBOY:** It's cruel that the people who most need financial

advice can't get it. That's changed over the past 30 years, right?

**GASPARINO:** Yes. I broke a story when I was a reporter at *The Wall Street Journal* that I'll never forget. In 1999 I got a call from a Merrill Lynch broker on Long Island, where they do a lot of high-net-worth investing. He said, "My branch manager sent around a memo today. He doesn't want us dealing with poor people." He faxed me the memo. "We at Merrill Lynch want to deal with the future rich people of the world. As a result, you cannot take an account for less than \$100,000. If you want to deal with poor people, you can get a nice job at the United Way." When I contacted Merrill, they tried to get me to not write the story. "What can we trade you not to write this story? You want an interview with our CEO?" I said no way. The story was too good.

**Q7**

**PLAYBOY:** So for people who don't have brokers, are there people on television they should pay attention to?

**GASPARINO:** Me. Listen to me. No, I try not to give investment advice. One of the things I like about Fox Business Network is that we don't tout stocks, unlike CNBC. I worked at the other network and have a lot of friends there, but that's a network of touting. Be very suspicious of that. You always step on your dick when you listen to touts.

**Q8**

**PLAYBOY:** Is Jim Cramer a tout?

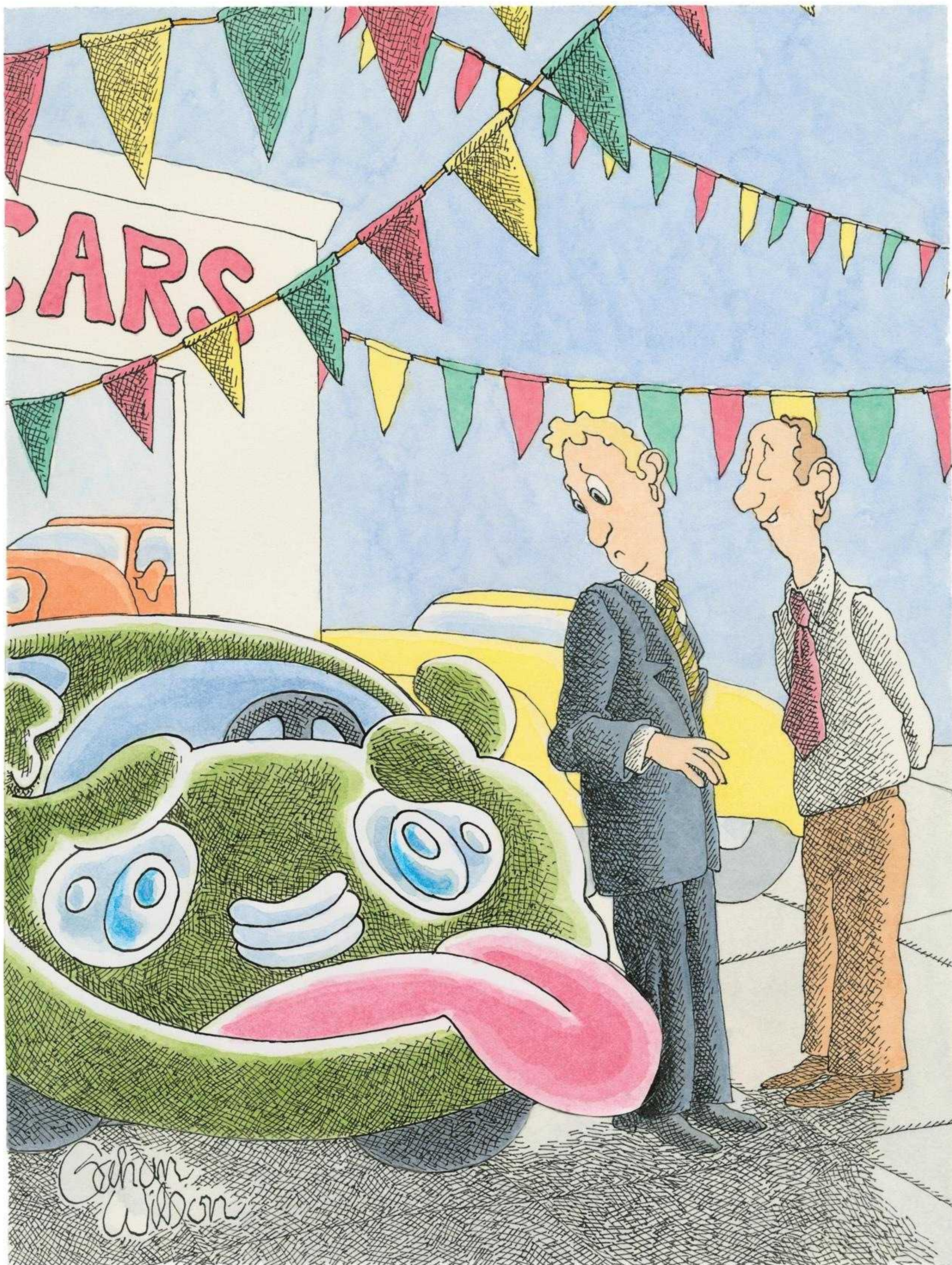
**GASPARINO:** Jim Cramer's a friend of mine. I don't think he's evil. I think there's a perception that he's out there to screw people. He's not. Listen, the best hitters in baseball hit .300, right? Warren Buffett has screwed up a gazillion times.

**Q9**

**PLAYBOY:** Who do you want to see in the White House in 2016?

**GASPARINO:** Marco Rubio, because he's a free-market person, but Hillary Clinton would be a better candidate, if she's not defined by the far left of her party. This will show you what an enigma I am at times: I've been reading stuff about Elizabeth Warren, and I agree 100 percent. She was talking about the revolving door between Washington and Wall Street. Jack Lew and Bob Rubin wrote an exemption on Dodd-Frank that allows banks to no longer put derivatives in a subsidiary. (continued on page 122)





*"The car obviously loves you, sir!"*





- By -  
VINCENT BOUCHER

COUNT DOWN THE HOURS  
WITH STYLE AS WE ASSESS  
THE NEWEST INVENTORY  
OF ATTENTION-WORTHY  
WRISTWATCHES





### 1. FELLOW'S TRAVELER

• Shinola's first dedicated travel watch features a black dial and rubber strap and has a turning top-ring bezel for accuracy across time zones.

The Rambler, [shinola.com](http://shinola.com), \$750

### 2. JET TO SET

• Michael Kors introduces a stainless-steel version of his JetMaster chronograph that has a sporty black silicone band and a self-winding mechanism.

JetMaster, [michaelkors.com](http://michaelkors.com), \$275

### 3. DEEP DIVER

• A performance-based chronograph with a brushed stainless-steel case and link bracelet, Szanto's 5120 Series features the SuperLuminova luminous display and is water-resistant to 500 meters.

5120, [szanto.com](http://szanto.com), \$375

### 4. RAISING THE NOIR

• Porsche Design's all-black Chronotimer Series 1 is a fully loaded self-winding mechanical chronograph that features a coated titanium case and bracelet.

Chronotimer Series 1, [porsche-design.com](http://porsche-design.com), \$6,290

### 5. SEAL IT

• Luminox marks its quarter-century anniversary with an update of its Navy SEAL Colormark, which sports a commemorative dial and unique self-powered illumination.

25th Anniversary Colormark, [luminox.com](http://luminox.com), \$395

### 6. SLIM DUNK

• Breitling gives a slimmer profile to its super-diver model (originally launched in 1957), with large luminescent numbers on the dial for enhanced visibility.

Superocean II 42mm, [breitling.com](http://breitling.com), \$3,400



WITH MULTIPLE DIALS AND ROTATING BEZELS, WEARING A DIVER'S WATCH IS A STYLE STRATEGY THAT GOES FAR BEYOND THE SEAWORTHY

# DIVING



# DRESS UP



ESSENTIAL  
FOR THE  
OFFICE AS  
WELL AS THE  
EVENING  
HOURS, THE  
BEST DRESS  
WATCHES DIS-  
PLAY SUBTLY  
CALIBRATED  
DESIGNS

## 1. PURPLE POSE

• Paul Smith clocks fashion points with his No. 7 wristwatch; its dial is tastefully striped, and the second hand is in his signature purple shade.

No. 7, paulsmith.co.uk, \$218

## 2. VINTAGE VIBING

• Vintage styling infuses TAG Heuer's spiffy Carrera chronograph; details include the retro logo and perforated leather strap.

Carrera Calibre 18, tagheuer.com, \$6,400

## 3. SEE THE WHITE

• Calvin Klein's Swiss-made automatic watch features a 42-hour power reserve and a white alligator strap for panache.

Alligator strap watch, calvinklein.com, \$1,600

## 4. JUST MY TYPEFACE

• Graphic designers esteem the minimalist Helvetica typeface; Mondaine's handsome watch displays the same timelessness.

Helvetica No. 1, mrporter.com, \$420

## 5. BACK IN TIME

• Moudin & Piquard and J. Crew's collaboration yields hand-assembled Swiss-made models such as this 1920s-inspired style.

Grande Seconde, jcrew.com, \$425

## 6. AUTO GRAPHIC

• Venerable watchmaker Hamilton explores the art of asymmetry with its Regulator Auto—a design statement as well as a precision timepiece.

Regulator Auto, tourneau.com, \$1,275



GET SOME  
COLOR WITH  
THESE SPORTY  
WATCHES THAT  
COMBINE FUN,  
FUNCTION  
AND A POP OF  
ORANGE

STAY

SPORTY

1 2 3 4 5



## 1. RUBBER SOUL

• Gucci adapts to the digital age with its oversize I-Gucci sport watch, which has an orange-over-black perforated rubber strap and a bold digital display in a steel case.

I-Gucci, [gucci.com](http://gucci.com), \$1,550

## 2. ORANGE CRUSH

• The household name in watches crushes it with the Timex 80, kitted out with an adjustable stainless-steel mesh band with gold-tone finish and a hipster-friendly citrus-orange lens.

80, [timex.com](http://timex.com), \$75

## 3. ONE WORD: PLASTIC

• In bold Aegean blue, the Patmos chronograph by Swatch packs a punch in plastic with its matte-finish case and bezel and white luminescent indices on an embossed silicone strap.

Patmos, [swatch.com](http://swatch.com), \$120

## 4. MARITIME MARKERS

• Nautica's matte-black-plated stainless steel BFD 105 sport watch boasts a gunmetal dial with neon markings, a mineral-glass face and a resin-coated leather strap.

BFD 105 Date Watch, [nautica.com](http://nautica.com), \$110

## 5. TOUCH TONED

• Tissot's T-Race Touch quartz chronograph features an aluminum case and a rubber strap. With a tap of your fingertip, it times your laps and tracks your stats in its logbook.

T-Race Touch, [tissotshop.com](http://tissotshop.com), \$575







MATHERS

PLAY  
MATE  
OF THE  
YEAR  
2015

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
*MICHAEL  
BERNARD*

*CHANNELING THE  
AMBITIOUS, WAYFARING  
ENERGY OF A GIRL CHASING  
DESTINY, **DANI MATHERS**—  
VIVACIOUS, FEARLESS  
AND SWEET—FINDS HER  
HOLLYWOOD ENDING IS  
JUST THE BEGINNING*





**O**n a long stretch of highway between the California desert and the City of Angels, an exuberant Dani Mathers glows against a deep-blue dusk. “California can be so raw and nomadic,” she says. “Being from here, I feel those qualities are a part of me too.” This is the road so many ingenues take to chase their dreams—and where a lucky few, like Dani, realize them. “I’ve wanted this for so long,” she says. “Like with any accomplishment, you work hard and hope it will pay off, but I can’t believe I did it.” Meet your 2015 Playmate of the Year.

Dani is the real deal, a self-motivated go-getter whose list of accomplishments surpasses ordinary expectations. As an actress, this past year she appeared in the blockbusters *Neighbors* and *Furious 7*. As a budding media personality, she created and helmed *Funny Bunny*, her comedy talk show on Playboy Radio. And as an aspiring entrepreneur, she continues to explore opportunities to unite her career with her passions. “There are a million things I want to do, and I think I could be good at a lot of them,” she says. “I truly want to be a Jane of all trades. But first I’m committed to being a great PMOY, and I’m going to work my hardest to show everyone how appreciative I am for this opportunity.”

She’s off to a good start. Since becoming Miss May 2014, Dani has represented PLAYBOY at events around the country, including Comic-Con and Super Bowl XLIX. “The second I put on my teal Bunny suit, I become proud and stand tall. I believe in PLAYBOY,” she says.

The five-foot-one bombshell, who recently chopped off a few inches of her signature blonde locks (this pictorial serves as her debut as a short-haired model), even gained some personal insight as a Playmate. “Only recently did I realize how much I love talking to people,” she says. “I love my job, and I’m not going to be quiet about it. I can’t wait to spend more time meeting people face-to-face.” No doubt the masses will be lining up for you, Dani.























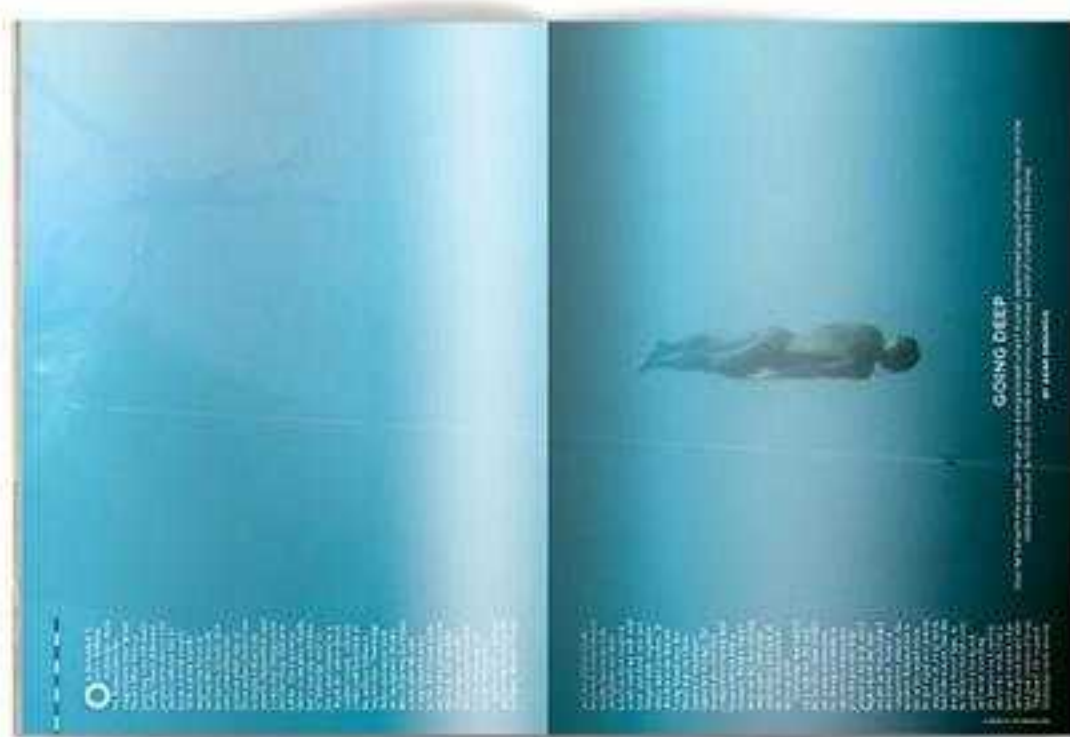




**STYLING**  
Leslie Lessin  
**MAKEUP**  
Camille Clark  
at Aim Artists Agency  
**HAIR**  
Jorge Serrano  
at the Only Agency  
**MANICURE**  
Emi Kudo at Opus  
Beauty, using OPI  
**PROP STYLING**  
Cydney  
Griggs Cullen







## GOING DEEP

*Continued from page 68*

the time Molchanov arrived on Long Island, he looked like the best man in the field.

Friendly rivals, the two couldn't have more different personalities. Trubridge, six feet tall and rail thin, favors yoga and a mostly vegetarian diet over weight training. He's also an introvert, spending his downtime at his Long Island home with Brittany—a bikini model and yoga instructor—or studying his dive profiles, seldom socializing with other athletes. The ripped, five-foot-11, 180-pound Molchanov is a weightlifting evangelist with the bulging legs of a sprint cyclist. He's also a social animal. After his dives at Vertical Blue he'd often flirt with cute free divers and lead group ocean swims. The Russian and Eastern European divers playfully call themselves the Eastern Bloc, and Molchanov, who lives in Moscow, is their leader. Trubridge is an island.

Competitive free diving is by no means a large universe, but it is growing, with new centers opening up wherever deep water is accessible. Rank-and-file athletes are similar to triathletes. They are extremely fit but not very young. Most are self-funded. The majority are over 30, and some are over 40. Among them are professional landscapers, electricians, software developers, architects, marine biologists and medical doctors. Michael Board, the best diver out of England, is a former Royal Marine who once patrolled the notorious and deadly Baghdad airport road as a highly paid military contractor during the Iraq war. He used that cash to open a flourishing free-dive center in Indonesia, which he runs with his girlfriend, Kate Middleton, a Kiwi national record holder and internationally known yoga instructor. Estrella Navarro Holm is a former Miss Baja California and a current national record holder in Mexico. Lena Jovanovic was an anti-Milosevic activist in Serbia who had to flee the country during the Bosnian war and now sells real estate in Orange County, California. Tomoka Fukuda was an Okinawan hairstylist who earned fame as an elite free diver in her native Japan. Jonathan Sunnex, another New Zealander and the head safety diver with a personal

best of 105 meters, once earned six figures as an electrician in Australian mines before he was 25 years old, but ditched the dust to compete and teach free diving full-time.

All of them are addicted to a sport that is both an athletic quest to push the limits of the body and mind beyond what anyone thought possible, and a spiritual experience. When they overcome their fears, ignore their urge to breathe and surrender to the sea down deep, they become a speck of pure consciousness in a vast dark abyss. Time slows, and the deeper they fall, the tighter the sea seems to squeeze until they feel a merge, a total loss of self. But they like their numbers too, and each time athletes hit a new depth, they feel a new charge, a new pride. When they go to bed that night, they revel in accomplishment, and when they wake the next morning, they set a new goal, a new depth, a new number—one they have a hard time letting go of until it's in their rearview. That's true for beginners, and it's especially true for competitors gunning for records.

Free diving is universal. Anybody who has ever kicked to the bottom of a pool or reef has done it, and it has served humanity for millennia. In the fourth century, Roman free divers helped erect and destroy wartime underwater barricades. The Ama, a culture of Japanese women, have made sailors swoon while free diving for oysters and pearls for more than 2,000 years, and lobstermen and spear fishermen have hunted the waters of Europe, Africa, Polynesia and Indonesia for centuries.

Competitive free diving got its start in 1949 when an Italian airman, Raimondo Bucher, dived to 30 meters to win a 50,000 lira bet. Doctors at the time predicted his certain doom, but Bucher pulled it off, launching a never-ending race to become the deepest man in the world.

In 1966 the great Italian free diver Enzo Maiorca extended the record to 62 meters, only to have it eclipsed by an old U.S. Navy submariner named Bob Croft, who dived to 64 meters. Frenchman Jacques Mayol, next on the scene, introduced yoga concepts to the sport. Mayol and Maiorca traded the record back and forth through the early 1980s, their friendship and rivalry inspiring Luc Besson's film *The Big Blue*.

Those were all no-limits dives, with athletes using weighted sleds to carry them down and balloons, which they'd inflate underwater, to bring them back to the surface. It wasn't until 1978, when Stefano Makula, another Italian, swam to 50 meters with fins, that self-propulsive free-diving competitions were recorded. Italians dominated that category as well, until 1987, when Cuban Francisco "Pipin" Ferreras dived to 67 meters. No-limits free diving was still king, however,

and Ferreras became the deepest man in the world in 1989 when he took a sled down to 112 meters in his native Cuba.

In 2002 Ferreras trained his wife, Audrey Mestre, for an attempt to break the no-limits record with a dive to 171 meters. She'd helped him train for years, and he often pushed her to compete, but Mestre's attempt was underfunded. Safety protocols weren't tight enough, and when the balloon that was supposed to bring her back to the surface failed to inflate, Mestre was doomed. She was underwater for more than eight and a half minutes and never revived. Some accused her champion husband of foul play, and her story is reportedly set to become a major motion picture starring Jennifer Lawrence.

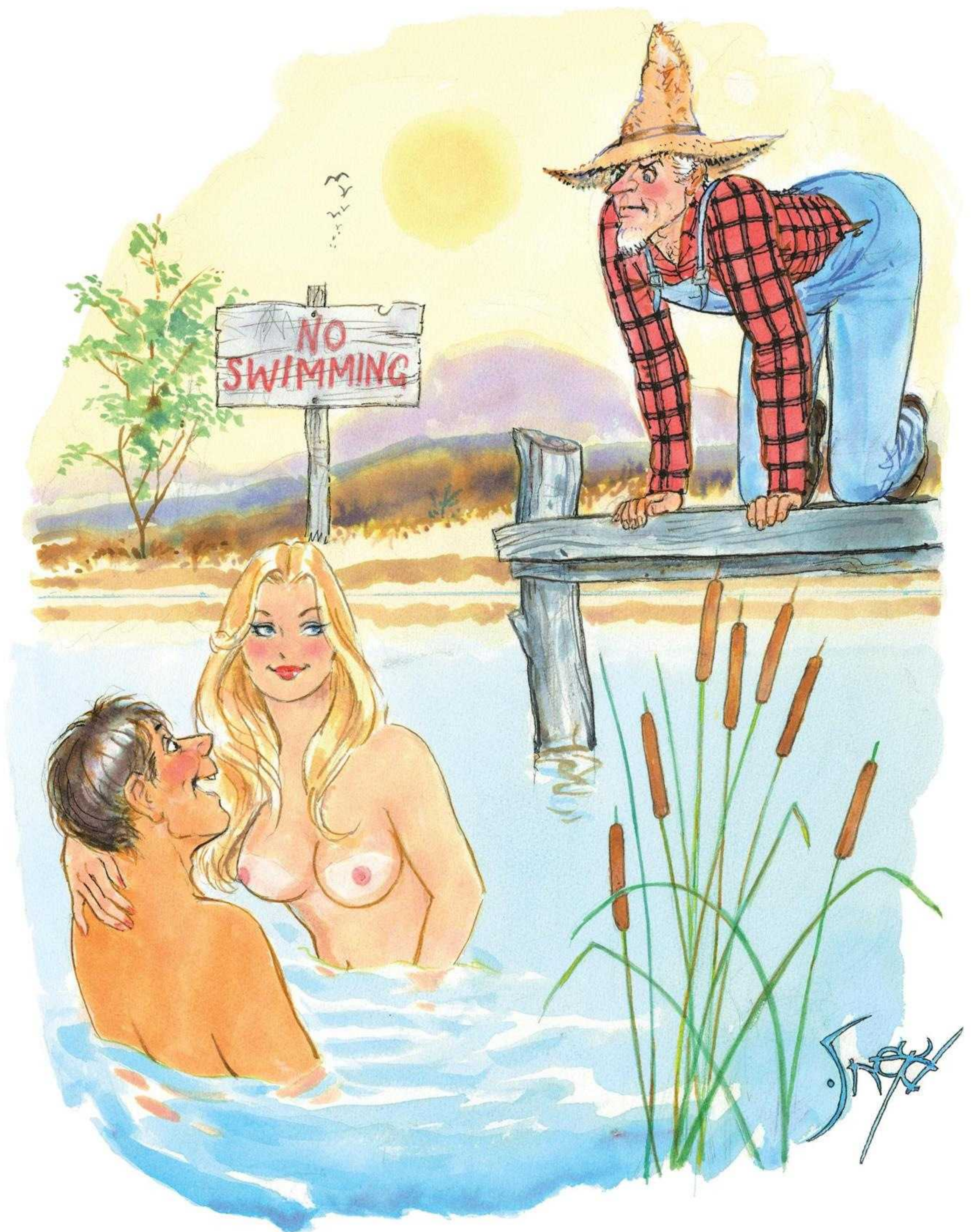
In 2012, after two high-profile near-fatal accidents, the Association Internationale pour le Développement de l'Apnée, known as AIDA International, stopped sanctioning no-limits attempts. The quest was deemed too hazardous and was by then considered more a personal feat and less an athletic achievement than other competitive free-diving disciplines, which everyone assumed were completely safe. That's why it was so shocking when Nicholas Mevoli, the first American to swim to 100 meters, died at Vertical Blue on November 17, 2013 while attempting to break an American constant-no-fins record with a dive to 72 meters. His was the first death in international competition, and it shook the sport.

A Nassau autopsy determined that alveolar blood vessels had hemorrhaged, filling Mevoli's lungs with blood and plasma. Meanwhile, a still unreleased follow-up autopsy, conducted at East Carolina University and led by American free diver Kerry Hollowell, will show that Mevoli had pervasive scar tissue in his alveoli (the lungs' air sacs). Hollowell also found a preponderance of repair cells called macrophages, which proves some of Mevoli's injuries were recent. The most recent wound was determined to have occurred on the Friday before his last dive, when he surfaced with blood dripping from his mouth.

I happened to be there the day he died, reporting on Vertical Blue for *The New York Times*. After a year of investigating Mevoli's life and death for a forthcoming book, I've learned that for almost two years he had been diving despite repeated lung injuries. Over and over he would tear the walls of his alveoli, an injury known as lung squeeze, and cough blood. Sometimes he would take days off; frequently he would not. He was not alone. Many athletes have done deep dives within days of a squeeze. The best dive in Molchanov's career, when he broke his own constant-weight world record by swimming to 128 meters at the 2013 world championships, occurred just six days after the worst squeeze he's ever had.

AIDA judges and event doctors have improved their screening processes since





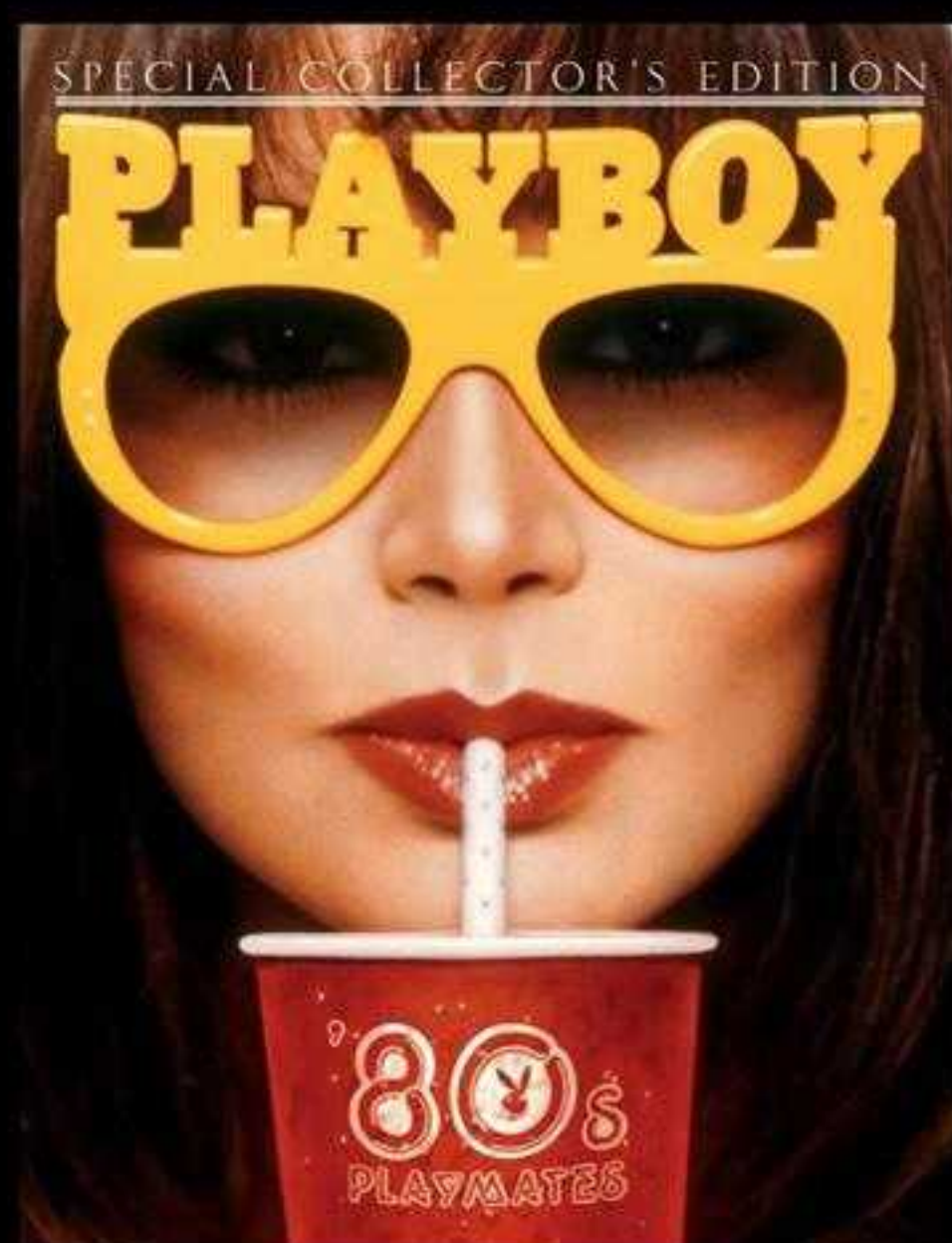
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Mevoli's death and become more vigilant in detecting lung injury. Still, prior to Trubridge's record attempt at Vertical Blue in 2014, a few divers who passed an oxygen-saturation test designed to detect lung squeezes had hidden their symptoms and were cleared to dive. Mevoli's death should have been a wake-up call to athletes conditioned to push their limits, but for some it only raised the stakes. They weren't just competing against one another or themselves any longer. They were looking to cheat death too. And that only added to the buzz.

"At the surface you have to accept that you might die," said Samo Jeranko, a Slovenian record holder and one of the deepest men in the world, after his 107-meter dive. "You must have no fear."

When he arrived on Long Island in mid-November, Molchanov was entering his prime. "I won't try to win," he told me playfully. "I will win." Meanwhile, Trubridge's pre-competition training had been hit-and-miss. A week before the event he enjoyed a clean dive to 100 meters. A few days later he blacked out on the surface after attempting 93 meters.

Nobody knew what to expect on December 2 when Trubridge's dive would be televised live to millions in his native New Zealand, thanks to their national beer brand Steinlager, his main sponsor. The company paid him six figures to shoot a riveting commercial and make the whole country proud.

For nearly six minutes Trubridge lay on his back, face up, and appeared to be in a deep trance. He was working to lower his heart rate, which would help conserve oxygen. Behind him a Steinlager banner hung from the bluffs. Seventy athletes and fans, including Molchanov, surrounded the competition zone. With 20 seconds to go, Trubridge built toward peak inhalation, filling his belly and then his chest with air before funneling it into the subclavian air pockets beneath his shoulder blades. Next he began to pack his lungs by slurping air, using his tongue as a piston to stuff each mouthful down. Forty packs later, he flipped and slipped below.

Within three elegant strokes he had passed a rugged reef on sloping sand that dropped off at the edge of the hole, rimmed with limestone cliffs at 10 meters. He was now at neutral buoyancy. After three more strokes and another 10-meter drop there was a second set of cliffs, and the walls receded. Now the blue hole was dark as a moonless night and about twice as wide as the cove appeared from the surface. Negatively buoyant, Trubridge stopped swimming and became as streamlined as possible. He closed his eyes and let gravity do the rest. It was time to go deep.

When free divers gush about their sport, most describe the sink phase. Free fall. During free fall some athletes confront their deepest fears as they travel about one meter per second. Others experience lucid dreams, but when they reach their target depth, dream time is over and they

must swim against that negative buoyancy, which is like fighting through a swift current. With each stroke they get closer to the light, and when they reach 10 meters they are once again positively buoyant. The hard part is over. Fresh air, fresh life is just seconds away.

As Trubridge's descent intensified and the increased atmospheric pressure compressed his lungs, the blood vessels in his arms and legs constricted, shunting blood to his core. The blood vessels in his heart and brain dilated, flooding them with oxygen, and his spleen contracted, distributing a fresh supply of red blood cells and increasing his available oxygen. By the second minute, his pulse had dropped to less than half his resting heart rate on land. Put it all together and you have the mammalian dive reflex, a term coined by scientists who documented a similar response in dolphins and seals. All humans have the capacity to trigger the dive reflex, but athletes like Trubridge have learned to maximize it for peak oxygen efficiency, which allows them to swim deeper and stay down longer than any humans have before.

Although Trubridge had been underwater for two minutes, his body didn't register an oxygen shortage as he approached 102 meters, because with each additional atmosphere of pressure, which occurs every 10 meters, the partial pressure of oxygen increases. His system held less oxygen than when he began, but the percentage of oxygen in his blood was more than adequate to sustain consciousness.

As he began to swim back against the pressure, however, a buildup of carbon dioxide signaled to his brain's respiratory-reflex center that something wasn't right. His intercostal muscles responded with violent contractions—every 10 seconds another gut punch—while lactic acid lit his legs on fire. He rose higher with each stroke, but that meant a continuous drop in partial pressure of oxygen. Hypoxia clouded his brain.

At 35 meters, two safety divers—who were also free divers—were waiting to escort him to the surface. As he approached 10 meters the mammalian dive reflex had already flipped; the blood was leaving his brain and core and was headed to his extremities. Starved of oxygen, his lips had turned blue, but that halo of turquoise light was getting closer by the second. His record, and a fresh breath, was still within reach.

When I landed at Dean's Blue Hole in 2013, I didn't set out to become a free diver, but the sport gripped me: the way the athletes meticulously prepared for more than an hour for their three to four minutes underwater; the way they moved with rhythm, elegance and daring; the suspense at the surface while everyone waited, wondering what was happening to the divers below, and the deep peace the divers felt after they rose up clean. You could see that buzz in their eyes. It looked a lot like bliss. I was there for the sport's





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darkest moment, and for an entire freedive season afterward I watched dozens of athletes black out or come up spitting blood, and still I needed to know what it felt like to keep diving when every impulse I had told me to come up. I wanted that buzz, so I sought out arguably the best free-diving instructor on earth.

"This is not some spa vacation. This is gonna be action-packed." Kirk Krack, 46, the boyishly handsome owner and lead instructor of Performance Freediving International, stood at the front of the room. "We're here for performance," he said, "to get you your best depth."

It was day one of PFI's four-day intermediate free-diving course in Kona, Hawaii, and I could already see why Krack is so esteemed. He has trained everyone from Navy SEALs (including members of SEAL Team 6) to Red Bull-sponsored big-wave surfers Mark Healey and John John Florence to magician David Blaine (whom he helped through an oxygen-assisted breath hold of more than 17 minutes) and even Tiger Woods. They all come to him, a kid from the Saskatchewan prairie, because he has coached dozens of athletes—including his wife, Mandy—to 23 world and hundreds of national records.

Once a tech diving instructor and scuba-shop owner in the Cayman Islands, he loves teaching new blood so much that he'd flown to Hawaii's Big Island direct from a film set in London, where he'd been acting as a technical advisor, to lecture 13 newbies in a cramped scuba-shop classroom in a mini mall. "You're all gonna have a little hill to climb, a little hump to get over," he said, "but by the end you'll be doing things you never thought possible."

I nodded, well acquainted with my mental mountain. An avid open-ocean swimmer, I thought the sport would be easy for me. I'd spent the previous November on Long Island, picking up bits and pieces from athletes who'd dive with me to make me feel comfortable. I didn't. At first I couldn't equalize. Then the pressure below 10 meters would become so intense, I'd bolt for the surface. I felt the pain but not the fun. After several attempts I managed to get to 19 meters and back. Afterward free-diving photographer Daan Verhoeven swam over and said, "That's some of the least-relaxed free diving I've ever seen." Not a compliment.

Relaxation is the key to efficient free diving because relaxed muscles use five times less oxygen than tense ones. Which is why at the end of day one, Krack guided the class through a relaxing breath exercise as we lined the edge of the pool behind Jack's Diving Locker. He reminded us to breathe from the belly and exhale for 10 seconds. Longer exhales lower the heart rate. Soon we were holding our breath, facedown in the pool, for one minute, then two, then three and four. We were practicing a freediving discipline known as static apnea. One of the sport's three pool disciplines, it's also an effective training tool. Krack told us that those who could hold their breath for three minutes in static could hold their breath half that long while swim-

ming. If diving to depth takes one meter per second, that means a three-minute static translates to a 45-meter dive.

One AIDA judge describes static this way: "It's like putting your balls in a drawer and slamming it shut over and over again." On my last attempt, I made it to three minutes 20 seconds but came up after one drawer slam. As my breathing normalized, I looked around and watched as several of my classmates fought their own nature. Some trembled and shuddered as the drawer kept slamming and the urge to breathe became overwhelming. It did not look fun. The best student got to five minutes 45 seconds before gasping for air and nearly blacking out. By then I'd seen dozens of athletes black out at competitions and get revived moments later, and that wasn't an experience I was looking for. I wasn't in Kona to push my limits that hard, I told myself. I just wanted to go a bit deeper and feel comfortable enough underwater that when I surfaced I'd have that buzz I'd seen in the gaze of so many athletes. Also, if you're writing a book about free diving, you probably shouldn't suck at it.

The Kona coast does not suck. Dry and rugged, it's blessed with coffee plantations, lava flows, horse ranches and a checkerboard coastline of white- and black-sand beaches. In the winter, humpbacks breed and breach offshore, their haunting song audible underwater, and on clear days you can see Maui floating in the distance. Free divers love it because there's deep water a short swim from the beach at Honaunau, a slender cerulean bay framed by two lava headlands. Divers call it Two Step, for its rocky entryway to the blue. South of the bay is Pu'uhonua O Honaunau, both a national historic site and a sacred spot for native Hawaiians, with a collection of traditional temples among the palms.

Krack and his team of instructors set up their rig of four lines dangling with weighted bottom plates. We started with free-immersion dives and then moved into kick cycles. Counting kicks helps divers track their depth. With extra-long free-dive fins offering more thrust than the scuba variety, it should take roughly six strong kick cycles to get to 10 meters and then six softer kick cycles to get to 20 meters.

My frustration bloomed immediately. I had trouble equalizing below 12 meters and had that familiar urge to breathe again, which felt like claustrophobia. Meanwhile, the rest of my group—Keoki, a Honolulu surfboard shaper turned investment advisor; and Drew and Joe, two pot farmers from Santa Cruz—hit every plate. On day two Krack saw a hitch in my approach. I was tucking my chin too much while breathing up at the surface and sucking water into my snorkel, which made it impossible to relax and get the deepest breath possible before I started to dive. On my free-immersion rope descents, I was moving too fast. He demonstrated a slow-motion pull technique that would lengthen the dive but require less energy. His demonstration was so slow it looked like torture waiting to happen. To make matters worse, the wind was strong



and the swell rough. As I was tossed in the tides, my brain-speak was on full blast, broadcasting all manner of excuses.

*The weather gods want you to fail.*

*Your wet suit is too tight. You drink too much beer.*

*You have the lung capacity of a pygmy chimpanzee.*

Krack calls that noise self-talk. On the first day he said, "If I could unplug your brain, you'd hold your breath for six minutes and dive to 60 meters. That's your physiological capacity." What gets in the way is stress—some of it real, some of it imagined. He meant that if I let it, the rollicking sea, my neurotic mind and the effort to assimilate new techniques into fluid habits would cause my heart rate to rise, my muscles to tense and my brain to confirm that yes, I suck at free diving.

After failing to reach the plate on the first four dives of the second day, all free-immersion dives, I'd had enough. For months I'd been stopping short. It was time to kill the devil on my shoulder and push through discomfort. This time, I decided to make five more pulls after the point of discomfort. On my third pull, I glimpsed the 15-meter mark on the line and decided to press on. Soon I hit 20 meters, a depth I'd long aspired to. Krack hovered beside me as I looked down at a shimmering white-sand bottom. My urge to breathe was gone. I wanted to keep going down, not up. I hung on the line for 20 seconds, enjoying every bit of it. Later that day, I kicked down to 23 meters and back without the faintest struggle.

The next morning was our final open-water session. For the first time as an aspiring free diver I approached the water relaxed and confident. My goal in the course was to hit 30 meters, or 100 feet, and I was ready. Ten warm-up dives later I'd have my opportunity. I prepared by breathing up slowly and calmly while watching Keoki kick down. A strong surfer, he'd been a star throughout class, but this time he surfaced hypoxic and blacked out. He came around right away thanks to Drew, who employed the safety techniques we'd learned like a seasoned pro, but it was still alarming. One hundred feet sounds deep to a layman, but it was nothing compared with the depths I'd seen divers hit in competition. In fact, I hadn't known it was possible to black out at that depth, especially with fins.

I looked back down to try to relax as my heart thumped. The plate seemed to disappear in the hazy blue, and my self-talk cranked back up, but this time I shifted the conversation and visualized success, just as Krack had taught us. I had my technique down, I told myself, and I'd been tapping that plate all damn day. I counted off my five purging breaths to reduce my carbon dioxide levels, took a peak inhalation, duck-dived and kicked down.

After my second kick cycle I stopped moving altogether. The seconds ticked on, but time stretched out as I enjoyed my entry-level 10-meter free fall. I hit the plate, turned and dolphin-kicked to the surface. At the 10-meter line I stopped kicking hard and simply floated up. It

felt good to take my time. At the surface a deep calm suffused my brain.

Many of Krack's students have told him he changed their lives by proving to them they can do more than they'd ever imagined. By pushing to go deeper, past my own discomfort, I'd uncovered my most subversive limiting factor of all: my negative self-talk. I indulge it far too often, and not just in the water. Too frequently my autopilot bleats out messages explaining why I can't, which gets in the way of believing that yes, I fucking can.

My goals were to not suck at free diving and to feel that post-dive buzz. I'd achieved both, but I gained much more. As a kid, I'd dreamed of floating through outer space; when I became an avid scuba and tech diver, I experienced the next best thing by exploring another world right here on planet Earth. Now I'd ditched the gear entirely, yet I was still capable of floating through space, because I'd learned to conquer the final frontier: not the ocean—nobody can conquer nature—but that infinite sea of mystery, ability and doubt that lies within.

Perhaps that's why athletes such as Trubridge and Molchanov, as well as recreational free divers everywhere, feel the pull to go deep and then deeper still. On each successful dive they learn more about themselves. It strips away limitations, inspires confidence that they can do and be more. Of course, at the competitive level that drive can become an obsession, which can be extremely dangerous. Fatal, even.

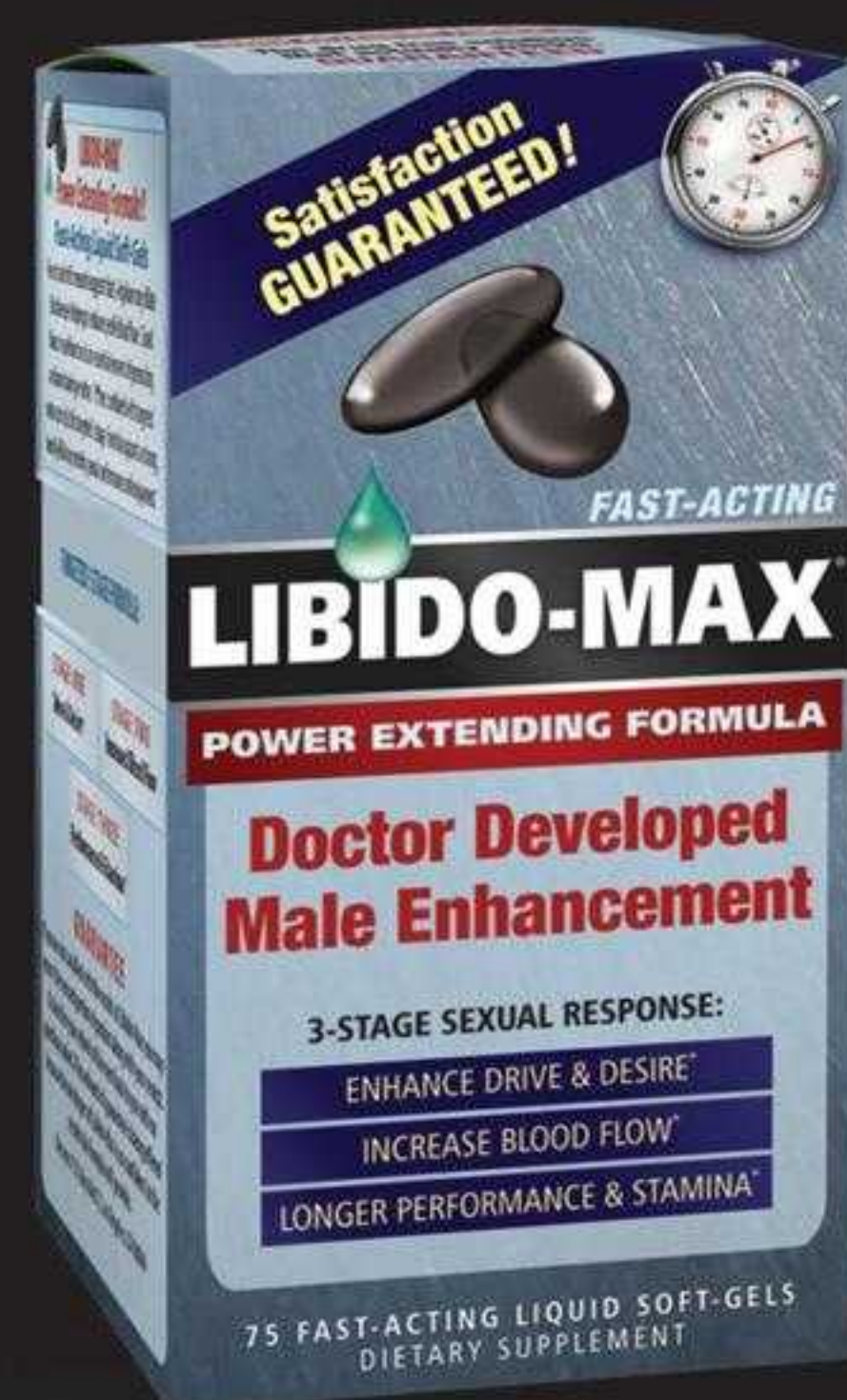
Trubridge didn't get his world record. He blacked out just below the surface, but the safety divers brought him up and he came around quickly. He left the beach that day despondent, but he had two more dives to go and needed to hit both to get on the podium.

A win seemed out of the question the next day as Molchanov prepared for his no-fins dive to 95 meters. "I expected him to get it," said Trubridge. When he didn't, Trubridge saw an opening and won the competition with back-to-back dives of 120 meters in free immersion and 117 meters in constant weight. A lesser competitor might have been consumed with doubt after a high-profile failure and perhaps hedged a bit on depth, considering he'd just blacked out. The buzz within the free-dive community suggested that diving again so soon might be dangerous and that he was setting the wrong example. Trubridge didn't listen. For better or worse, he believed, and thanks to a clutch performance, he was still on top.

"It was a little topsy-turvy," Trubridge said as we sipped icy Steinlagers on the white sand, staring out to the blue hole. "But it does feel really good to have finished this way." His smile was wide, but I could tell he was distracted. His engineering brain was already probing for areas of improvement, considering what it would take to go just a bit deeper.



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## REZA ASLAN

*Continued from page 52*

to drive a Bentley? Not only is that now considered a legitimate version of Christianity, it's currently the fastest-growing Protestant movement in America. In this country we've seen a misappropriation of Jesus to promote extreme right-wing views about gays, guns, immigrants and poor people that not only violate everything Jesus taught but would be scandalous to Jesus were he to actually hear what these people constantly claim when they speak in his name.

**PLAYBOY:** Is this what inspired you to write about Jesus as a historical figure?

**ASLAN:** I have so much love and affection and esteem for Jesus the man and what he preached that when I see people bastardizing that teaching for their own grotesque political and economic advantage, it enrages me. In the same way that I can intellectually say Osama bin Laden is as much a Muslim as I am—a Muslim is whoever says he's a Muslim—and yet I can't help but have an emotional reaction when I see someone taking part in abhorrent actions in the name of Islam.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you accept that as an essential

problem with religion—that people interpret it to suit their purposes? It's a claim of the new atheists with whom you spar.

**ASLAN:** Absolutely. You can have two people of the same faith look at the exact same verse of scripture and come away with two opposite views. In this country 200 years ago, both slave owners and abolitionists not only used the same Bible to justify their viewpoints, they used the exact same verses to justify their points.

**PLAYBOY:** But if religion is endlessly interpretable to suit anyone's purposes, doesn't it lose its meaning?

**ASLAN:** That's an overly simplistic way of thinking about it. I believe the Koran is divinely inspired. I believe the Bible is divinely inspired. I believe the Bhagavad Gita is divinely inspired. I also believe *Abbey Road* is divinely inspired.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you believe that miracles reported in the Bible are true?

**ASLAN:** I think the word *miracle* is problematic, because it has come to mean a break in the natural order of the universe, and that definition requires a miracle to have some kind of divine aspect to it. When I think of the ancient mind, the conception of miracle then was quite different. It wasn't a break in the natural order of things, because the natural order of things was steeped in magic and miracles. It's not unusual to think of Jesus as a miracle worker or as an exorcist or healer. We read the gospel and see Jesus healing people and say, "Whoa! That must be what set him apart from everybody else," except there were hundreds of miracle workers just like Jesus walking around doing the exact same thing Jesus was doing. It was not that weird.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you believe Jesus actually made the blind see and the deaf hear?

**ASLAN:** Was a person [healed by Jesus] who was thought to be possessed actually an epileptic? Was a person who was thought to be dead actually in a coma? They had no conception of a coma or epilepsy. They saw the healing of those illnesses as miracles. That's one way to put it, I suppose.

**PLAYBOY:** What about the parting of the Red Sea?

**ASLAN:** I know a lot of people love to say things like "Oh well, you see, it appears as though Moses parted the Red Sea because there were these tectonic shifts that gave way" and "There was a tide issue." That's an attempt to bring 21st century thinking into ancient times. Stop! Stop! It's true that plenty of real events have been given mythological explanations. The flood is a great example of this. We have flood narratives that go way back. In fact, the earliest written text ever, *Enuma Elish*, which predates the Bible, mentions a flood and a man who builds a boat in order to survive it. I say just appreciate it for what it is, which is myth, and understand it for the truth it's trying to reveal, not the facts it's discussing.

**PLAYBOY:** What about the Resurrection?

**ASLAN:** What is a historical fact is that very soon after Jesus's death, his followers were convinced he rose from the dead, and that belief is what founded this religion. It had nothing to do with anything Jesus himself said or did.

**PLAYBOY:** How do you explain the Resurrection?

**ASLAN:** Was it a mystical experience or a psychotic event or mass psychosis? Put it into whatever your particular modern scientific need to explain something is. I don't know if I'm unique in this way, but I'm not thirsting for some sort of explanation. I revel in mythology because I understand what it is.

**PLAYBOY:** Although you were born a Muslim, for part of your life you converted and believed in Jesus as the savior. What prompted your conversion to Christianity?

**ASLAN:** I grew up in a family of lukewarm Muslims and exuberant atheists. My mother was the lukewarm Muslim, somebody who came from a culture in which Islam infused your very identity, very much in the way that Christianity infuses the identity of many Americans. My father, on the other hand, was militantly atheistic—in fact, deeply antireligious. He was the kind of person who would get along very well with Richard Dawkins or Sam Harris. His distrust of religion ended up saving us.

**PLAYBOY:** How did it save you?

**ASLAN:** My father, who never trusted anyone wearing a turban, had no interest in sitting around to see how the revolution in 1979 was going to work itself out. When Ayatollah Khomeini returned, he made these grand statements about how he had no interest in any kind of political role, that he just wanted to go back to his studies and his family. My father heard that and said, "Bullshit." He thought it would be a good idea for us to leave Iran until things settled down. It turns out my father was right, which he reminded me of every day until he died.



"Uh...Ms. Stronmeyer, please bring me my elephant gun."



**PLAYBOY:** Why did you become a Christian?

**ASLAN:** In Iran, Islam was part of my cultural experience, but when we came to the United States in the 1980s, it was an era of tremendous anti-Muslim sentiment. I spent a good part of the 1980s pretending to be Mexican—which, by the way, did not help matters at all. This says something about how deeply in trouble your particular ethnic community is when you assume Americans will treat you better if you say you're a Mexican. We scrubbed our lives of any hint of Islam. My mother still prayed occasionally, but we never would have described ourselves as Muslims in any serious way.

**PLAYBOY:** Did you believe in God?

**ASLAN:** I believed in God, yes, but I didn't have any framework for that belief, and I had no real opportunity to explore any kind of meaningful spirituality until I was in high school. I went with some friends to an evangelical youth camp in northern California, and it was there that I heard the gospel story for the first time—this incredible story about the God of heaven and earth coming down in the form of a child and dying for our sins; this promise that anyone who believed in this story would also never die but have eternal life. It was a transformative experience for me.

**PLAYBOY:** Why then did you ultimately reject Christianity?

**ASLAN:** It just so happened that it was an extremely conservative, fundamentalist, evangelical branch of Christianity I'd joined, one that was predicated on an absolute sense of biblical literacy and inerrancy, and that idea was force-fed to me from the very beginning of my spiritual journey as a Christian. Within that belief were the seeds for my downfall as a Christian, because I have never been the kind of person to just simply accept what someone tells me. I would go to church and hear these sermons about what the Bible says. Unlike most everyone else in my community, I would actually check, and I would discover that the Bible actually didn't say what the pastor told me it said, or if it did say that, it said so in a completely different context than what my pastor was telling me, or if it even had that same context, that it could be interpreted in multiple ways that were in conflict with what my pastor was telling me. So even at 16, 17 years old, I would show up to Bible studies and raise my hand and say, "I'm not sure that's really what this scripture says." The response I would get from this community was that they would lay hands on me in order to pray the doubt away. It did not take long for me to realize that while I was being fed spiritually in a way that I deeply desired, there was something inherently off about the particular community I was receiving this spiritual edification from.

**PLAYBOY:** In general, are young people the most susceptible to indoctrination into extreme forms of religion?

**ASLAN:** Yes, they are naturally drawn to fundamentalism, because it provides ready-made, very simple black-and-white answers to questions they are just beginning to ask. It's why when you look at a lot of these

extremist groups around the world, they tend to be inundated with young people.

**PLAYBOY:** How much is belief in religion about the promise of being saved versus the threat of punishment if you don't succumb?

**ASLAN:** The thing I am most disturbed about when it comes to religiosity is how much of its morality is predicated on some kind of divine reward or punishment. Whatever else one wants to say about atheists, they are not amoral by any means. On the contrary, they are far more moral than most religious people are because their sense of right and wrong is not based on some kind of divine reward and punishment that may or may not arise, whereas so many religious people act almost single-mindedly on this perceived, imagined idea of what will happen to you in the afterlife.

**PLAYBOY:** A common refrain about suicide bombers is that they're motivated by Islam's promise of a reward in heaven of 72 virgins. Is that accurate?

**ASLAN:** It is not. I think people would be surprised at how little any religion whatsoever plays in the act of suicide bombing. Nearly half of all suicide bombers in the past 30 to 40 years have been nationalists and have blown themselves up for what can only be described as secular reasons. The other half of that group, the religious ones, are very clearly divided among Christians, Muslims and other minority religious groups. Suicide bombers who failed in their missions and were arrested and interviewed almost to a person never mentioned the 72 virgins or the promise of rewards at the end of times. What you most often hear are justifications that marry religious, political and economic issues. They are just as likely to say they are doing this for the very real financial reward their handlers have promised their families. They will often say that they are using their bodies as a kind of smart bomb in a war they are convinced they are fighting, even though the other side may not be fully aware of that war's existence.

**PLAYBOY:** How devout a Muslim are you now?

**ASLAN:** When you study the religions of the world for a living it becomes difficult to take any one religion all that seriously. You realize very quickly that religion is nothing more than a language of symbols and metaphors to express something that is universal. To put it another way, religions are just different paths to the same destination.

Nevertheless, it's important to choose a path if you want a deep, meaningful, spiritual life. As the Buddha once said, if you want to draw water you do not dig six one-foot wells. You dig one six-foot well. Islam is nothing more than my six-foot well. But I know what the Buddha knew, which is that no matter what well you draw from, the water is the same.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you pray the required five times a day?

**ASLAN:** I pray whenever I want to commune with God. I am not interested in the external shell of religion. I'm interested in breaking through that shell and experiencing God directly.

**PLAYBOY:** In which religion will you and your wife raise your children?

**ASLAN:** If religion is nothing more than a



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language to express faith, then we want them to be multilingual. We want them to be familiar with all the religious languages of the world so that when they're at a place where they want to express their personal faith they can choose whichever language they feel more comfortable with, whether that's my language, Islam, or my wife's language, Christianity, or any other language. It makes no difference at all as long as they are on the path, as long as they are searching for meaning.

**PLAYBOY:** When you became disenchanted with Christianity, was your anger directed toward the interpreters of the Bible or the Bible itself?

**ASLAN:** When I went to university and decided to study the Bible for a living, it took approximately five minutes to learn that the Bible is full of the most obvious and blatant mistakes and contradictions. And because my entire spiritual edifice was built on a foundation of inerrancy and literalness, the whole thing collapsed. I was very bitter. I felt

as though I'd been sold a forgery. But my anger was toward Christianity in general. It's embarrassing to admit, but for a while I would feel this sense of satisfaction in disturbing other people's religious beliefs, because I was an expert on the Bible and I loved taking people who were certain in their belief system and destroying that certainty. I would get a sick sense of pleasure out of it, and it was, in a sense, a kind of revenge for feeling I'd been duped. But a couple of things happened. Number one, I couldn't help but realize that these fundamentalists whose certainty I was deriving so much pleasure in destroying seemed a lot happier than I was. And I thought to myself, What kind of an asshole am I that I'm going out of my way to disrupt somebody's happiness out of a sense of vengeance for what I feel was done to me? Secondly, as I started to study comparative religions more and more, I became much more adept at understanding what religion actually is and how it's differentiated from

faith. We think that religion and faith are the same thing, but they're not the same thing.

**PLAYBOY:** Explain the difference.

**ASLAN:** Faith is individualistic, it's inexpressible, it's ineffable. Religion is nothing more than the language we use to express faith. A lot of religious people have seamlessly married their religious identity with their cultural, ethnic and nationalist identities. They feel as though their particular experience of religion is what everybody's experience is. The irony, of course, is that often critics of religion make the same mistake, but in reverse. They will look at scripture or theological arguments about religion and make grand assumptions about the lived experience of religious people. For me, being somewhat in the middle of the argument between the religiously devout and the atheistic secularist and recognizing that neither understands what the other is experiencing or even saying has become both a career and a gigantic headache.

**PLAYBOY:** Is it all a headache, or do you take pleasure in battling with the likes of Maher, Dawkins and Harris?

**ASLAN:** It's starting to become no longer fun primarily because, well...I'm just going to be perfectly honest: because of Sam Harris. Harris has a very large, very devoted, very fanatical social media following, and they don't like it when you're mean to their master, and they let you know. He has this troll army. I joke that Harris must be the first atheist in history to have accidentally launched his own religion. It's uncanny. He is the opposite of charismatic. But I can write anything I want about Richard Dawkins. Some people will disagree or agree. They will not hijack my entire Twitter feed for days at a time.

**PLAYBOY:** Can't you simply ignore Harris and the army?

**ASLAN:** I have to say there is something immature about me in that I still have a sort of devilish desire to be difficult to people like him who seem so easily riled up. Fanaticism comes in a lot of different forms.

**PLAYBOY:** Does this divisiveness take away from the conversation about religion or add to it?

**ASLAN:** In a sense, the atheist fanatics provide a valuable negative pole that only makes my views that much more reasonable. Look, as a public intellectual, my dream has come true. It is to get people to talk about the things I'm interested in. For me, just the fact that we're having this discussion, that conversations my friends and I have all the time, that my students and I have all the time, are now taking place in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, on TV, in coffee shops. I can't be more thrilled about that. It's not about me. I've become a catalyst for what I consider to be a much-needed conversation in this country about religion, politics and the role of both in society. But the criticism has gotten worse, more violent, more vitriolic, and it has begun to affect my family, even my wife sometimes, and that bothers me. I would be lying if I said it doesn't affect me. At least my kids are left out of it for now. But Aristotle said something I can't forget: If you want to avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing, be nothing. That's just never been an option for me.



*"Sounds like you have a contagious disease, Mrs. Hogaboom. I'd suggest you see another doctor."*





## NO SEX, PLEASE, WE'RE JAPANESE

Continued from page 90

And that is when *otaku* became a synonym not for *geeks* but for oddballs who lusted for *bishojo*, and not just oddballs but downright perverts. And as far as sex was concerned, that's when the *otaku* began to be viewed not just as shy fellows who were afraid of women but as men who were incapable of real sex. "See, these *otaku* are definitely lacking something in the masculine behavior department," wrote one critic. "Most of them leer over cutouts of Minky Momo and Nanako [anime characters], yet can't bring themselves to speak to an actual woman." *Otaku* became outcasts.

The Japanese coined a name for their sexual obsession: "two-dimensional complex." Some men carry life-size pillows of their favorite manga, anime and video game characters, taking them to movies, cafés and shops and expressing their feelings to them. Others play *Love Plus*, and one man actually arranged to "marry" his digital girlfriend Nene in a televised ceremony. "Now that the ceremony is over," wrote the groom to a Japanese blogger, "I feel like I've been able to achieve a major milestone in my life. Some people have expressed doubts about my actions, but at the end of the day, this is really just about us as husband and wife."

Perhaps the most bizarre manifestation of the two-dimensional complex is *hentai*, which refers to highly explicit sexual animations that depict not only boy-girl intercourse but bestiality (squid and octopus tentacles are particularly popular), rape, violence, incest and the fantasy of cartoon girls with animal

characteristics such as horns and dog ears. Anything goes in *hentai*. But its defenders insist this isn't just a matter of pure arousal, even though in one study a majority of *otaku* admitted to masturbating to *hentai*. They say *otaku* have real feelings for the cartoon girls, just like the feelings generated by *Love Plus*. One *hentai* artist told Galbraith, "Look, it's about liquids. You either come or you cry." But whether you cry or come, you aren't having real sex. You're having a strange facsimile of sex.

And that's the problem.

So it's the guys' fault. Except that young Japanese women haven't shown much interest in sex lately either, if you remember those statistics—those 49 percent of young women who weren't in a romantic relationship and those 45 percent who weren't interested in or actually despised sex. That certainly seems to have affected relationships. The number of married couples in Japan is in steep decline, which may not speak to the frequency of sex but does speak to the plummeting birthrate, since the Japanese stigmatize illegitimacy. One in four women in their 20s is unlikely ever to be married, and 40 percent are unlikely to have a child. Some female abstainers seem to be responding to the changing male persona. They want stronger men, not herbivores and *otaku*. According to Japan's Institute of Population and Social Security, 90 percent of young women said that staying single is "preferable to what they imagine marriage to be like." And some men seem to be responding to the changing female persona of stronger, more independent women—a persona that earned the sobriquet "devil wife" for women who continue to work after marriage. One man told a reporter, "I don't like real women. They're too picky nowadays." Meanwhile, an unmarried Japanese female magazine editor said, "Maybe we've learned how to service ourselves." Gynecologist Kunio Kitamura has another explanation. He thinks women feel "sex is more trouble than it's worth."

And to complete the picture, it isn't just singles who have gone sexless. Married couples in Japan are abstaining from sex too. That Family Planning Association survey

found that 40 percent of married couples are sexless, defined as having sex fewer than 12 times a year, and couples who have sex three or more times a week are only three percent of the married population. A survey of 600 married women found that 26 percent hadn't had *any* sex in the past year. Of course, the Japanese have a name for this too: "sex disgust syndrome."

But before you conclude that the Japanese are just a lot of abstinent weirdos, you come upon another clue in the search for the missing sex: the evidence referred to earlier that declining sexuality seems to be an international phenomenon. In Britain, for example, the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles revealed that sexual frequency among men and women age 16 to 44 has dropped in the past decade from an average of 6.2 times per month for men and 6.3 for women to 4.9 and 4.8 respectively—compared with four times a month for the young Japanese. Said the principal investigator of the survey, Dr. Anne Johnson of University College London, "We tend to think that these days we live in an increasingly sexually liberal society, but the truth is far more complex." Brits are having less sex now than they used to.

A survey on sexual frequency commissioned by the condom manufacturer Durex found that Greece was the most active country, with 87 percent of Greeks having sex weekly. Russia (80 percent), China (78 percent) and Italy (76 percent) also rated high in sexual activity. But amorous France listed at 70 percent, Germany at 68 percent, Canada at 59 percent and the United States at 53 percent, which placed it above Japan at 34 percent. All of which suggests, again, that we aren't as randy as we like to think we are.

To get deeper inside those statistics, you can look at the 2010 National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior conducted by the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University. It shows that 56.9 percent of single American men age 18 to 24 did not have vaginal sex in the previous year, which falls to 46.6 percent for men 25 to 29 years old. (For women the numbers were 50.8 percent and 43 percent.) But even for those men with partners, not spouses, the numbers were 26 percent and 20.8 percent respectively, and only 30





percent and 36.4 percent of those respective age groups were having sex weekly or a few times a month. Another researcher concluded that American men over the age of 18 may claim they average 63 sex acts per year, but they're not telling the truth. The actual figure, he has determined, is 30 times—once every 12 days. Not exactly orgy stats. A similar 2008 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics determined that fully 27 percent of men 15 to 24 had never engaged in sex at all—up from 22 percent in 2002.

And if the frequency is dropping, so is the level of sexual satisfaction, which, according to the Durex survey, includes the ability to have an orgasm, freedom from sexual dysfunction, good health and an "exciting" sex life. Greece again had a high percentage—those horny, happy Greeks!—at 51 percent. Further down were Germany (38 percent), France (25 percent), and the United States and Canada tied at 48 percent, which is still above the international average of 43 percent. (For the record, Japan is at 15 percent.) A more recent Durex survey of Americans, from 2012, itemized their sexual complaints—too fast (37 percent) and infrequent simultaneous orgasms (37 percent)—and added that 65 percent daydream about making love outside the bedroom. So here it is: Like the Japanese, we don't seem to be having all that much sex, and most of us aren't particularly enjoying the sex we do have.

You may have gotten the idea by now from all this data that it's a pretty grim picture. But before we try to identify the worldwide culprit responsible for the lack of sex-

ual interest, a few caveats are in order. The first is that not everyone buys into the idea of rampant sexlessness. Some Japanese say the whole focus on sexlessness is just a sensationalist Western spin that took off when *The Guardian* website in Britain posted a 2013 article with the luridly provocative title "Why Have Young People in Japan Stopped Having Sex?" These defenders of Japanese sexuality say that one could make an anecdotal case, at least, that there is a lot of sex going on in Japan, which accounts for the fancy love hotels, where couples escape for discreet affairs, and for the persistence of a highly sexualized *yanki* culture of young revelers who stand in stark contrast to the *otaku*. Some think the Japanese are so comfortable with sex that they don't need to talk about it, even to pollsters, or that they can be more honest, which may apply to the rest of the industrialized world as well. As Merry White, a Boston University anthropologist who specializes in modern Japanese culture, surmises, "Maybe sex is so normal that it's lost its excitement"—by which she means not the excitement of the sex act itself but the excitement of talking about it.

Moreover, though it's clear marriage rates are falling not only in Japan but throughout the industrialized world (from 72 percent of Americans in 1960 to 51 percent now), some of this may have to do with increased rates of cohabitation and not declining interest in relationships. For example, in the United States since 2010 a plurality of people between 25 and 34 have never been married. To underscore that, in a 2010 Pew Research Survey, nearly 40 percent of Americans said that marriage was "obsolete." And while

it's true the birthrate in Japan and, again, in most of the industrialized world, is declining, one can't extrapolate from that fact that people are having less sex. That's what birth control is for. And finally there's the question of what constitutes sex. Even if young people are having less vaginal sex, it's possible they're having other kinds of sex that don't show up in surveys.

And yet, even when you take those caveats into consideration, it is difficult to avoid the evidence that sexual activity has diminished. We know the *what*, and we know the *who*. But we still need to find the *why*.

You may get closer to the source when you think of those men playing *Love Plus* and its later iteration, *Love Plus +*. The Japanese have blamed those game-obsessed, manga-obsessed, anime-obsessed *otaku*, but the *otaku* aren't the cause of the decline in sex. They are examples of it. What they have discovered is that technology can provide many of the satisfactions of sex, though obviously not its most powerful satisfaction, and in doing so, they may point to a different kind of sexual future. And yet, what seems new-fashioned—two-dimensional love—may actually be very old-fashioned. Looking for the sorts of relationships that they have been unable to enjoy with real women, deep and caring relationships, the *otaku* displaced that desire onto manga and anime characters. You could say they were looking for true love and found it. Sure, vaginal sex would have been great, but it wasn't the primary objective. Or as the *otaku* expert Patrick Galbraith has observed, "Sometimes what people say about *otaku* is that they are asocial or antisocial. But I think in most cases they are just social in a different way." That is, digitally social.

You might think of it like this: Many young men and women in Japan, and many in the United States for that matter, are suffering from an intimacy gap—the gap between what they want, which is real and compliant partners, and what they can have in a fast-moving, pressurized, atomized world. According to one survey, 82.2 percent of Japanese men in their 20s who were not in a relationship nevertheless said they still wanted to have sex. Now technology can sort of fill that gap without all the Sturm und Drang of human relationships, which is a large part of the appeal of *Love Plus*. It's painless. Computer scientist David Levy even predicts a time when our partners will be replaced by robots—essentially partners designed to our specifications.

Part of this is narcissism. Part is convenience. When it is so much easier to fill the intimacy gap with technology than with real human companionship and real-life sex, a whole lot of people are likely to do so, despite the very real physical deficits. Indeed, we have a culture of digital intimacy, some of which can lead to real intimacy—everything from sexting to social media to dating apps such as Tinder, of whose users one *New York Times* reporter recently wrote, "Their erotic energy was focused on the touchscreens of their smartphones." Digital connection is so rampant among millennials that there are now "textationships," those that are conducted exclusively by smartphone (and





obviously sexless), as distinguished from those that are IRL—"in real life." The fact that we have an acronym for *non*-digital relationships speaks volumes. And while social media can certainly facilitate hookups and should lead to more sex, we've seen that they haven't necessarily had that effect. Even among collegiate 18- to 25-year-olds, a randy and ripe group if ever there was one—and one that is addicted to social media—a University of Portland study comparing sex from the period 1988 to 1996 with sex from 2002 to 2010 showed that in the latter era 59.3 percent had had sex in the past year, down from 65.2 percent in the earlier period.

While it is possible that having more access to more partners, as social media allows, has made men and women pickier rather than more promiscuous, it is equally possible that technology in this country is as much a substitute for intimacy as it is in Japan. For \$25 a month a new service called Invisible Boyfriend creates a virtual BF who sends e-mails and texts to girls hoping to stop their parents and friends from pestering them with questions as to why they aren't in a relationship. The user chooses the name, physical characteristics and personality of the phantom lover. And for those who want to take a deeper plunge into virtual intimacy, there has long been the popular website Second Life, which is self-descriptive. Users choose an avatar who then interacts with other avatars in an alternative reality. Those interactions include romance, though one has only to visit a Second Life forum to see that these virtual relationships are just as fraught as real ones. "If we were meant to be that fictional person we created," commiserated one Second Life user to another, "we would be already. Eventually the truth comes out."

But technology is a capability. It isn't a motive, and motive is what we're looking for. That leads us to the real issue—the reason *otaku* are fixated on manga and anime, the reason so many young people around the world are seeking intimacy in the digital realm of social media and not IRL, the reason there seems to be a reluctance to form relationships and, yes, the reason sex doesn't seem to be as much fun for many folks as it used to be.

That reason is anxiety.

Begin with Japan. Perhaps more than any other industrialized country, Japan is gripped by anxiety or, rather, anxieties. Japan had always been the land of the salaryman—"everyone employed from cradle to grave, everyone more or less sure of his future," as Merry White puts it. Japan's exceptionalism was that life was both predictable and secure. But then came the economic downturn of the 1990s and the great deflation, and suddenly the salaryman was a "dinosaur," to use White's term. All the predictability, all the security was gone. The hardest hit was the Japanese middle class, and the hardest hit in the middle class were the young. They were thrust into what one cultural anthropologist called the "precariat," meaning they were living precariously. By one study, only 3.5 percent of men age 25 to 34 make more than the average worker's income. With diminished economic prospects came diminished prospects for marriage and for children and even for sex. Jeff

Kingston, professor at Temple University in Tokyo and author of *Contemporary Japan*, calls the economic catastrophe, from which Japan has still not fully recovered, a "betrayal."

The anxiety that came from that betrayal has had tremendous ramifications. It has forced young Japanese to "invent the world you're going to have to live in," according to White. And it is that reinvention that has contributed to the new sexual landscape. They know they can't operate the way their parents did, even if they wanted to. But many of them have decided they don't want to. Their lifestyle, including its sexual aspects, is a kind of rebellion against the old Japanese values of a stable middle-class life.

Seen this way, the *hikikomori*, the *kawaii* (cute) boys, the herbivores and the *otaku* are not just peculiar. They're deliberately, willfully peculiar. They want to challenge the culture that failed them and, frankly, failed itself. After all, many of those older sexless married couples say they work so hard now that they're too tired for sex. "There's an ideal that people don't match or want to match," says Galbraith, "so that increasingly they're not finding themselves in those kinds of relationships that are recognized as committed, reproductive relationships." In effect, not having sex, not getting married, is a way to stick it to society—to take the psychological damage society inflicted on them and give it a political twist.

Of course Japan is hardly the only nation suffering from economic hardship and anxiety. And that's where the rest of the world, including the United States, comes in. (How to explain those sexy Greeks, who are in dire economic straits, is a conundrum.) While

they may not all be in the throes of rebellion, worldwide there is now an entire generation wounded by postrecession economic, social and even sexual anxiety, and many of them, like the Japanese, are in the process of reinvention, trying to figure out new modes of survival, new forms of intimacy, new ways of avoiding commitments they can't fulfill. As MIT psychologist Sherry Turkle writes in *Alone Together*, an analysis of technology and interpersonal relationships, "We look to technology for ways to be in relationships and to protect ourselves from them at the same time." Basically, this generation is afraid.

None of this is necessarily irreversible. In time, anxiety can subside, people can regain their economic footing and their confidence, as is happening in America right now, and presumably the desire to have IRL relationships, sexual and otherwise, can return. It's all biological, says Justin Garcia, a research fellow at the Kinsey Institute who has studied the effect of technology on sex. "There are certain things that happen when you see someone, when you taste someone, when you smell someone, when you hear the sound of their voice," he says. "And we have mechanisms that have evolved in our brains to respond to those types of unique human interactions." That's why, Garcia believes, technology can never replace sex. You can't get all those things from *Love Plus* or Invisible Boyfriends or sexting or robots, so no matter how many people have sought refuge from their anxieties in virtual intimacy, disappearing sex is likely to make a reappearance. Or as an oddsmaker might say, never bet against sex.



*"I'd like you to try this drug the FDA just approved before they come to their senses and recall it."*





## CHARLIE GASPARINO

*Continued from page 94*

What the fuck is that? Fucking Citigroup is writing that law. I agree with everything Elizabeth Warren said. Sometimes people at Fox think I have a little Trotskyite mustache. They think I'm a little *too* liberal.

### Q10

**PLAYBOY:** Your politics are difficult to figure out. You call Wall Street evil, but you like free markets. You're in favor of gun control. You occasionally say good things about Obama. How does that go over at Fox?

**GASPARINO:** I'm not the most right-wing nut in the world. Far from it. I was on the air the other day when Ben Stein called Al Sharpton a weasel. I said, "Let's be clear, he's not a weasel. I've known Al Sharpton a long time. I don't like a lot of stuff he does, but he raises some important issues about the way the black community perceives police forces in this country." I never got so many nasty tweets! People called me a greaseball for defending Sharpton. I told a few people to go fuck off.

### Q11

**PLAYBOY:** Why did you leave CNBC for Fox?  
**GASPARINO:** I wanted to work here. This was my career path: a bunch of shitty publications to a less shitty publication to *New York Newsday*, then I finally got to *The Wall Street Journal*. I was making pretty good money at CNBC. Did I get paid more by Fox Business Network? Absolutely. I have zero stock options, just so you know. God forbid I had stock options tied to our ratings right now, because I'd be in real trouble. But if it works out here—I'm not saying it will happen, but it might—the payoff is going to be great. And not just the money payoff, but the payoff of creating something.

### Q12

**PLAYBOY:** Fox Business Network is struggling much more than Fox News, in terms of ratings. What does Fox do well?

**GASPARINO:** One of the biggest problems with TV is predictability. I know Rachel Maddow really well, and she's brilliant, but she's predictable. The rest of them on MSNBC, I always know what they're going to say. Fox is actually really good at this. It's less predictable. You may not think so, but I'm telling you, Bill O'Reilly is not doctrinaire. There's more of a debate at Fox than on other networks. Do I think Sean Hannity likes President Obama? No. Do Ed Henry and James Rosen hate Obama? No way. We

have both sides of the story. CNN does too, but I think we do it better. There has to be a reason our ratings are better.

### Q13

**PLAYBOY:** You covered Eliot Spitzer starting in the late 1990s, when he was attorney general of New York and prosecuted Wall Street executives and sued Richard Grasso, who was chairman of the New York Stock Exchange. Did you know Spitzer was a creep before the rest of us knew?

**GASPARINO:** I don't consider him sleeping with hookers being a creep. I'm more of a libertarian when it comes to stuff like that. That's his personal life. My wife would hate me to say that, and not one woman on the planet will agree. He was a creep in terms of the hypocrisy. He busted people for that same stuff. He took a deposition of Grasso's secretary to suggest that Grasso was having sex with her. At one point during a deposition he tried to suggest that Grasso had a love child, just to embarrass him. There was a rumor at some point. Grasso said, "We understand he's got something going on with some young girl." That went in one ear and out the other. But I said to Grasso, "Spitzer's gonna step on his cock someday." [laughs] I never thought it would be so literal.

### Q14

**PLAYBOY:** Some people are libertarians because they want to be able to take drugs legally and own lots of guns. Are you one of them?

**GASPARINO:** When I was a kid I smoked a little pot and stuff like that, but I was never heavy into drugs. We're putting African American kids in jail for cocaine. We're destabilizing lower-middle-class families. Should they be in the same cells as rapists or murderers? Guns are a different story. I don't think we should be selling submachine guns on the corners, and I know some libertarians who believe that. I disagree with libertarians on a lot of stuff.

### Q15

**PLAYBOY:** You've said President Obama fundamentally doesn't understand the American economy. The stock markets are way up, and unemployment is down. Don't you owe him an apology?

**GASPARINO:** Listen, the stock market's better, but who's making money? Me. Fat cat Gasparino and all the fat cats at Fox. We're doing great! The average person hasn't done well. Wages are shitty. If you write code, you get a job. If you want to flip burgers, you can probably get a job. It's the stuff in the middle that's getting tight. When Obama first took over, he was threatening to raise taxes and planning a stimulus to get us out of the financial crisis. He was both destimulating the economy and trying to stimulate it. And he should not go on jihads against businesses when he needs them to hire people.

### Q16

**PLAYBOY:** What was your record as an amateur boxer in the Bronx?

**GASPARINO:** Three and one. I had four official bouts, but I've been in the ring hundreds of times. I did it for a long time. My mother was begging me to quit. I was going to fight in the

Golden Gloves in 1980, and I didn't, because I got into girls and stuff. I was once sitting at a bar stool, and I saw my sparring partner win the semifinal bout. I was as good as him. That was probably the biggest mistake of my life. That was one of the things that drove me in this business—I decided I'm never going to give up. There's a persistence in my reporting that I take from that, because I fucked up by skipping the Golden Gloves. My father told me that every day.

### Q17

**PLAYBOY:** Your dad was a tough guy, wasn't he?

**GASPARINO:** He was a really tough guy, a street guy. He grew up without a father, in a tenement in the Bronx. He was a scout sniper in the Marines. And he worked as a wire lather—it's a type of ironworker. It was a very dangerous job. He fell off a scaffold 10 times. Maybe that's why he died in 1985 when I was in journalism school. I don't know, but he had Parkinson's disease. He was a blue-collar Democrat who sometimes voted Republican. He was a big Nixon guy but also voted for Teddy Kennedy. And he was very big in his union. He believed that the top one percent shouldn't control everything. That runs through my veins every day. When Fox goes on the attack against unions, I'm like, Let's back up a minute.

### Q18

**PLAYBOY:** Was your dad temperamental like you are?

**GASPARINO:** He was a fighter. Some guy threatened my mother once. My father took out an Ernie Banks bat, walked to the guy's house and stayed there for three hours. I grabbed the bat and ran away, and he still stood there. The cops came. Then the guy called my mother another name, and my father decked him. My old man hated bullies. And that's part of my thing with Twitter—I hate bullies. Twitter's full of them, and that pisses me off.

### Q19

**PLAYBOY:** Let's talk about Twitter. In November you tweeted a number of insults at Ron Insana of CNBC. You called him "fat boy," "fat slob," "not just fat but dumb," "disgusting slob" and, for an encore, "a putrid, balding, disgusting fat-cat bootlicking sycophantic douche." Is that any way for an adult to talk?

**GASPARINO:** If you're going to throw the first punch at me, be ready for nuclear war. Telling someone to go fuck themselves is completely within the bounds of ethics, especially when they're wrong and I'm right. Truth is a defense. The guy we're talking about is a fat, unctuous, sycophantic Wall Street suck-up. He'd been saying stuff about me behind the scenes, and then one day he said it on Twitter, and I lost it. I'm a combative person. I have to admit, I am kind of a prick at times. Even my friends will say, "He's an asshole."

### Q20

**PLAYBOY:** Does your wife read your Twitter posts?

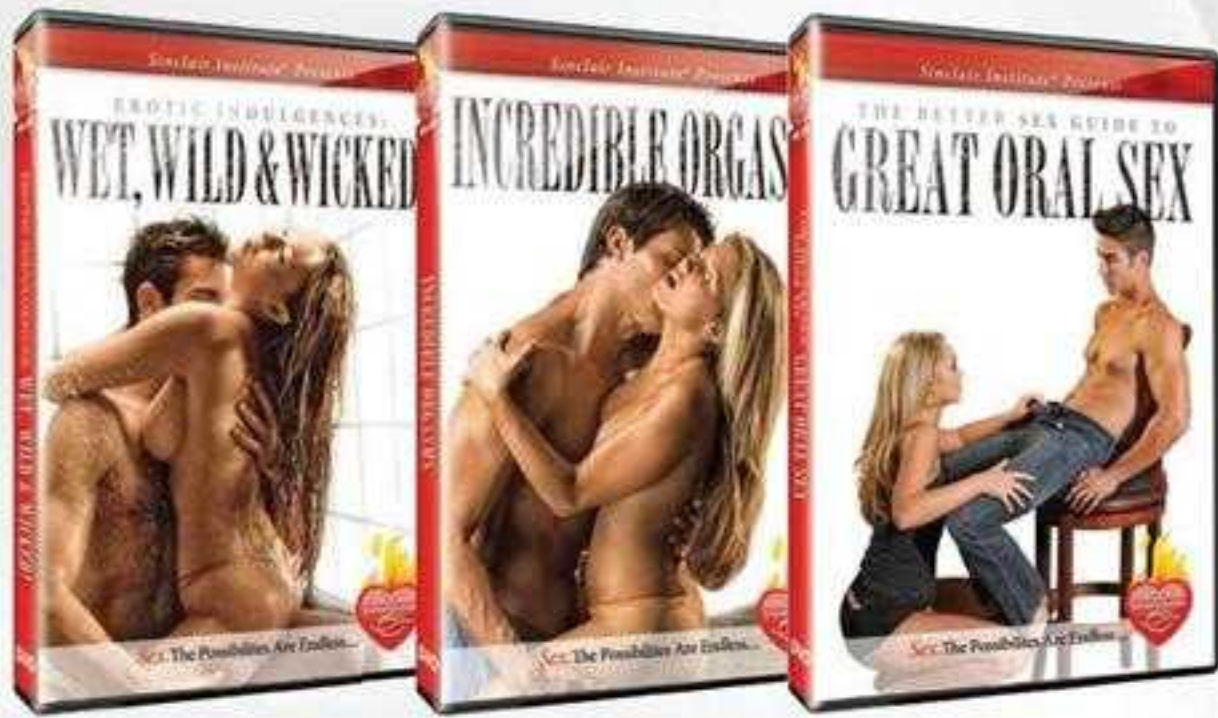
**GASPARINO:** Yes. And she says, "Oh my God, what are you doing?" Often.





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## ODIN

Continued from page 75

indiscernible from tears, and I forgot for a second that she had called me not out of kindness, or even decency, but because the court had ordered it.

"Daddy——"

"Hey, buddy——"

"Harlan an' me taught Juno fish bump oh crap buhronicles!"

Then all I heard was iPhone eating carpet, followed by more sounds of blunted, faraway joy. After a minute Jess picked up the phone.

"Sorry. I got him something for Christmas and he saw me taking it out of the bag."

Like always, it was out of me before I even knew it had words to latch onto.

"Why are you always trying to turn him against me?"

"I don't know, Latham," she said. "I think you're doing a pretty good job of that all by yourself."

Jess and I met in Baltimore during our cardiology residency at the U of M, where we were both shit-talking and fuck-you fat. We would smoke outside with the EMTs and get drunk at happy hour with the nurses. Most of the other residents—the skinny Asians who grew up in suburbs named after office parks and dreamed of becoming dermatologists or pediatricians or GPs, as well as the occasional Jewish boy who still hadn't gotten the memo to come to Wall Street—gave us a pretty wide berth.

Our patients were junkies and the war homeless. On the rare nights that they didn't get knifed or raped or OD'd, they would put their fists through windows or run headlong into razor wire to get a bed.

"I got an SHP in 4-12," I would say.

"SHP?" would say Richard Lu or Sin-jin Park or whoever. "It's a purpura, right? Vasculitis?"

"No, fuckhole," Jess would laugh. "It's a subhuman piece of shit."

I took her to Crisfield, where I grew up, at the piss-end of Chesapeake Bay. We slept in my grandmother's old twin bed, all 400 pounds of us. We drove around and bought beer and cigarettes and went crabbing in the shallows without a license just like Uncle Malcolm had taught me. When the police boat came by we hid on our knees in the bay grass, and when it was gone Jess blew me unapologetically while the egrets looked on, pouty and bored. My parents

kept a brooding distance all weekend, curious about the smart part of me—the part I had cultivated on my own, in secret, afraid that if they found out about it they would stamp it out—and what it had brought home. We were as exotic to them as black people, or happiness.

Malcolm was my mother's brother and, other than me, the only one who got out. It was to get a Ph.D. in poetry, I think, though that was clearly off the table by the time I was born. He had a long, rosacea-ruined face and was always coming from someplace different, Burlington or Amherst or New London, some college town with a public square where an old man could hang out with the runaways and oi punks and buy them beer and later try to suck their dicks and get beat up and do it all over again the next day. When I was a kid he would show up every year in the general vicinity of Christmas and upend a black plastic yard-waste bag onto the floor. There'd be lip balm, tube socks, roll-on, disposable lighters and sometimes penny rolls from the bank taking off for the corners in their red construction-paper jackets.

"If the mayor wants a Filet-O-Fish," he'd say, "you'd better get him one. That stylish bastard is on a hot streak!"

Or "You don't believe me? Go to the Ritz and ask the white bartender. He'll remember. I'm the one who put his cigarette out in Bob Lowell's butter dish!"

And often there was song: "Degree! Degree! I'm getting a degree!/In comparative histology!/Microbes dance and microbes sing/But the macrophage eats everything!"

Even a six-year-old can tell true joy from booze-fueled mania, but it was unusual to hear anyone make any noise in the house at all the rest of the year, so I took what I could get.

And he always had something special in the car for me: a plastic flying-saucer sled or a carving knife for whittling the marsh-softened wood or something from Heathkit.

The last time it was a brand-new Marlin bolt-action .22.

Even though the clouds were already pink he led me out into the woods and showed me how to load and aim. I shot the dirt and took the branches off some trees, my shoulder stinging from the weight.

"Now for a real target," he said.

He found a sapling that was roughly his height, then took off his mackinaw and threaded a spindly branch through each arm so the tree looked like it was holding its arms up over its head in surrender.

And then, while he hooted and shimmied and shivered, I put hole after hole in his jacket, the smoke rising off it like steam.

When I ran out of ammo, he took a step back and looked at what I'd done. Tears and snot ran down his face, from the cold, I hoped, though I wasn't trying to look too hard.

"I keep no rank nor station," he said. "Cured, I am frizzled, stale and small."

The next December I was in the woods when a fierce wind tore through. I looked up to see the last of the yellow leaves rattling in the tall trees.

My mother was in the kitchen.

"Where's Uncle Malcolm?" I asked her. "I don't know," she said. "Indianapolis?"

About 25 years later I happened to pick up a greasy *Norton Anthology* that one of Jess's roommates had left on top of the toilet tank.

There it was: "I keep no rank nor station...."

"Home After Three Months Away."

By Bob Lowell.

I looked at it awhile, trying to find something, but in the end it's just a piece of smugly unilluminating faggotry.

Jess moved in at the beginning of June, just before the last year of our residency. I had a structurally unsound townhome deep in Carroll County that she did her best to humanize. A trio of majolica roosters appeared on the kitchen counter one day, a little wastepaper basket in the bathroom the next. Trivets. Glass ashtrays. Copper-bottomed skillets hanging from cast-iron curlicues. Buffers against the tendency of things to burn or stain or otherwise go to shit.

The dogs were not on anybody's to-do list. We were driving home from breakfast one day and saw a cardboard sign propped up against the mailbox at the end of somebody's driveway.

BULLDOG PUPPIES it said.

A ropy tweaker in cut-off jeans and a St. Barts T-shirt answered the door and led us into the kitchen, where five of them were nursing blindly on a Cookie Monster doll.

"Where's the mother?" Jess asked.

"I don't know," the guy shrugged. "This is how they came." I noticed, for the first time, that he was wearing lipstick.

Jess sat down on the floor and lifted the dogs out one by one. Within a minute they had nosed into her crotch and fallen asleep in a big pile. I have a picture of that on my old phone, wherever that is. Of the moment when she looked up from the pile to find my face.

We took two, because that's what you do when you're still in that place where you think you can control somebody else's loneliness, animal or otherwise. They'll keep each other company, we thought. They'll talk dog.

So that's how it was that summer: me and Jess and Odin and Frank out on the splintery, listing deck. Reading. Ashing in the glass ashtrays. The dogs loose and slack as spilled milk, their bellies sunburning while I rode Jess's clit with the ball of my foot, bearing down and easing up on it like a pedal until she pulled me into bed to finish the job.

And then one night after I came, I proposed to her. Odin, roused by the noise, loped in and licked my balls.

Yet.

Yet, yet, yet.

It became clear pretty fast that marriage and me were not going to be on the same page.

I think it was when Jess decided to get skinny. There wasn't any conversation about it. I just walked in one day and found a treadmill in the dining room.

"It's for both of us," she said.



"Yeah, okay," I said. "I'll try not to hog it."  
She was on it all the time. More and more of her sloughed off, until all that was left was the treadmill and cigarettes.

And then just the treadmill.

I would take Odin and Frank out for a walk and hear the *thrum-stomp-thrum* through the open window.

The smart part of me fought hard but, as always, proved no match for the rest.

I am being cuckolded by a machine, I thought.

She is already running away.

And the dogs would squat and shit, looking up at me with naked affection as they bore down.

On our wedding night I smoked crack with the busboys at the hotel and then, apparently, told Jess's mother about the time I stapled some SHP's broken face back together because it would have taken half an hour to stitch properly. Out on the dance floor I got in her *Bones*-producing brother's face and licked his glasses.

That night in bed, Jess tried to talk to me.

"Whatever," I said. "I liked you better when you were fat."

There were two decent cardiology practices in Memphis and both had openings, so we moved there. We bought a house in a new development and a big piece of land southeast of Oxford, Mississippi for me to run the dogs on. Jess called it the Duchy of Swampfucker.

I took up with a nurse who had a gift for prescription fraud. With a Percocet in me I found that I could see patients and make small talk. With two, I could get the grandmas in holiday sweaters who ran the hospital gift shop to fight over who was going to take me to lunch.

I would go down the cafeteria line and choose ribs, chicken, sweet potatoes, green beans, corn pudding, catfish, hot rolls, okra, pasta with Italian gravy and pie. Little pleated Solo cups of comeback sauce or remoulade would hydroplane raffishly across my tray.

One day there was a new lady behind the steam table. She was maybe 60 and bigger than I was by almost another me.

"You look like somebody," she said. "Paula? Who he look like?"

When she moved I saw the roll and kink in her hip. Dysplasia.

"I don't know."

"Yes, you do. It's the one from that movie."

"How am I supposed to know what movie you're talking about?"

"You know. The one where he put his foot through the windshield."

"I don't know nothing about no windshield."

"Yes, you do. It's the *Pineapple* movie."

"*Pineapple Express*? You think he look like James Franco?"

"No, not him. The other one."

"The Rogen one?"

"No, not him either."

"Ain't nobody else in that movie, Teesha."

"Come on, now. You know who I'm talking about."

"I am done with this conversation."

"The Jamie Foxx one! He in the Jamie Foxx one about the president."

"Channing Tatum?"

"That's who!" She put an ice-cream scoop of pimento cheese on my plate. "You look just like Channing Tatum."

Something unfurled inside me.

I could swear it was the smart part, in reckless, unfathomable bloom.

On my next day off I drove out to the Duchy and let the dogs loose. After a couple of hours of hunting I found an arm-thick white ash branch about seven feet long, dragged it back to the truck, and drove home.

For the next month or so I would pull the branch out of the truck bed between patients and whittle it down with the knife Uncle Malcolm had given me all those years ago. The wood was smooth and slippery, and I had to stop every few minutes to dry the sweat off my hands. Even so, one time I ran the knife right through the tip of my thumb and had to pop another Perc and stitch it up.

When I had a proper walking stick, I rolled it in a piece of bright green felt and brought it to the cafeteria.

She wasn't there.

"Where's Teesha?"

"You didn't know? She took that job in West Memphis. Closer to her grandkids."

I walked through the cool halls and then the lobby atrium and kept going until I found myself way out in the auxiliary parking lot, where I unwrapped the stick and beat the asphalt with it until the grip broke off and skittered away. When it came to a rest, there was Channing Tatum's fist-size face, perfectly rendered in white ash, staring down the hard Memphis sun.

On the last night, I stopped by the nurse's place in Orange Mound after work. She made me a couple of drinks and then, while I was fucking her, slipped an Opana into my asshole.

I got home two hours late for the dinner party we were having for Jess's partners. I was supposed to smoke some salmon on a cedar plank in the Big Green Egg, but Jess had just stuck it under the broiler, and everyone had eaten it in mortified, un-Southern silence. When I walked in they were drinking red velvet vodka in the living room and playing some portable electronic game called *Catch Phrase!* that one of the wives had brought.

"Wu-Tang Killa Beez, we on a swarm! Wu-Tang Killa Beez, we on a swarm!"

I lay down on the couch and put my head in Jess's lap.

"All right," one of the wives said, all watery and chipper, "this is one word, three syllables. It's a person who is very concerned, very anxious about things——"

"What is cunt?" I said.

"Latham," Jess said.

"The last syllable is a kind of growth, I think it is viral, like a little bump you might have on——"

"What is assfister? What is coozedribble?"

"Why are you answering in *Jeopardy* form?" one of the doctors said, trying to put some kind of headlock on the situation.

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"This isn't *Jeopardy*."

"Wart," someone said.

"Yes!"

"Worrywart!"

"Dingdingdingding!"

"What is your mother fucks AIDS monkeys?"

I got the divorce papers before I even knew she was pregnant with Zack. She got the house, the money, the dogs and most of the boy. I got the land and the right to bury the dogs on it.

JP had moved in with Jess when Zack was two. He called himself Armenian but was raised in Paris by his filthy rich pill-dulled mother and her second husband, a famous psychiatrist who hated children. JP was kind, soft, inquisitive and forbearing and held eye contact longer than necessary. How he ended up in Memphis I knew at one time but have forgotten.

When I pulled up to the house he was standing in the driveway next to his 1990s Volvo wagon, which was filled with the Oriental rugs he sold for a living, their whorled ends jammed up against the back window.

"I am so sorry," he said and gave me a big hug, pressing his belly against mine, his beard on my neck.

"Tell me the truth," I said, all gravitas. "Are you touching my son's weenie in the night?"

He shook his head wearily. "Come on. I'll show you where he is."

A great push of forced-air heat, with its faint

recycled smell of myself, met me at the door. And then the rugs.

JP had covered the floors with them in overlapping layers, pink and gold rosettes interrupted by silver birds and sky-blue swastikas and dolls with orange hearts and moons and fists and hot white points of light, like a fireworks show where the fucked-up technician keeps pressing the button too soon, releasing another one and then another and another, before the last has turned to smoke.

I wished I had done just one more bump. Or maybe one less.

When we reached the bedroom, JP put a hand on my shoulder. "I tried to get him out myself, but he's stuck. Maybe if I lift, you can pull?"

I got down on all fours. Odin's belly had distended with the rigor mortis and was wedged against the box spring. When JP lifted the bed I grabbed both sets of paws and tugged as hard as I could. He came out in sharp little judders, his fur catching on the carpet fibers.

He was bigger than the last time I had seen him. Tiny white hairs had begun to mist his eyes and his black lips. But the main thing was how stiff he was. The pink drum of a belly. The invisibly trussed legs. Even the jowls looked frozen in place.

JP left for a minute and came back with one of the rugs.

"This was his favorite. I was measuring it one day, and he climbed on, and that was it. Odin's forever."

"Don't do that."

He shrugged. "It is happening."

We rolled him up in it and put the whole thing in the truck, and after I had a smoke I went back into the house to take a piss and wash my hands. When I pulled one of the hand towels off the bar, I saw a Zack-high smear of dried—what? blood? snot? shit?—behind it on the wall.

I closed my eyes.

More fucked-up fireworks.

Patterns strangled and stomped on, colors raped and replaced.

By the time we were on the far side of Oxford, I could tell that JP was working himself up to do some serious empathizing.

"So, Latham," he said. He was always very big on addressing people by name. "How are you?"

"Fine, Jean-Pierre," I said. "How are you?"

"Are you still seeing Sharonda?"

"It's not polite to answer a question with a question."

"Really? We are really doing this?"

"Yes. Apparently we are."

"Can I ask you something?"

"No."

"Do you really hate everything that much?"

"No. I love that in most public restrooms now they put a trash can right by the door so you can open it with a paper towel and then throw the paper towel away. I think that is truly stellar."

"You know, we both want to help you get your privileges back. Even Jess."

"And coming. I love coming. That shit never gets old."

He sighed again. "It is always *épater* with you. *Épater, épater*. Pretty soon people are going to stop trying."

"God, I sure fucking hope so."

When we pulled onto the fire road it was almost midnight. I parked and we carried the rolled-up rug across a narrow valley, more of a divot, really, to a flat spot under the big red cedar that Odin and Frank liked to nap under.

The moon was high and clear, so we turned off our flashlights and set to, shovels flinting on the rocky soil. After a few minutes JP stopped to wrap his underused hands in some gauze from the first-aid kit and talk about the landscape and the Deep South and the beauty in specificity. The deep, sing-songy Frenchness of his voice running on like an unseen stream.

An hour or so later, when we had a hole, we unrolled Odin to look at him one last time in the cold light.

I couldn't do it. I couldn't put him in the ground like that, in that permanent flinch.

So I waited. I sent JP back to Memphis in the truck and sat by Odin's body for three days, batting the flies away, the crows, the scavengers. Watching the looseness, the sag and slack of it, slowly return. Watching him unburden himself of death. Watching him return to his body.

I buried him.

Then I walked down the road till I found a pay phone and tried to think of who to call to take me home.



"Where's the sunscreen?"





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## A WRONG TURN IN MEXICO

*Continued from page 58*

website, on January 13, 2014. “No matter what it is, however, I feel like adventure is that delving into the unknown, and everyone has that desire in them.”

Twelve days later Devert disappeared.

Erik Dissinger was on call late on the night of December 9, 2013 when an emergency crew radioed for a tow at the scene of a motorcycle crash on Interstate 4 in Daytona Beach, Florida. A car had cut off a motorcycle, knocking the rider off balance and sending his bike skidding into the right lane. The rider had gotten up and run into oncoming traffic, waving the cars away from his bike.

Dissinger sized up the rider as a weekend-warrior type. Dissinger, on the other hand, looks every bit a repo man. He is 300 pounds and five-foot-11 with a bull neck and Fu Manchu beard, and he rides a Harley. He loaded Devert's damaged bike onto the truck, and they drove it to a mechanic who stayed open late. Dissinger asked how far Devert was riding and was astounded at the answer: Brazil. No one goes that far for his first real ride.

“He came from a totally different side of life than me, but the way he said he felt riding is the same way all of us bikers feel riding,” Dissinger wrote in a Facebook message.

An hour later, they were parked in front of the hotel, still talking. Dissinger was selling him on Daytona's annual Bike Week, and Devert promised to come back for it. In his hotel room, Devert published a photo of the bike on Instagram. “Grateful to be alive is an understatement. Hopefully this won't delay my trip too long. One of the best days of my life.”

South Florida is an odd place for a stop-over for someone riding from New York to Mexico, but Devert was looking for something from his past. Devert was 18 and a trainee in the Army reserves when his father, Georges, a Frenchman and successful insurance broker, was diagnosed with cancer. Harry was born outside Paris in Saint-Cloud, and Georges went to great lengths to initiate his son into French culture, even after he and Ann divorced. Harry grew up in Pelham but skied the French Alps on winter break and spent summers on the French Riviera. Georges used to say of his son, “*C'est mon oeuvre*”—“He is my work of art.”

Georges was a playboy and an adventurer and already 56 years old when his son was born. He had been in the French airborne

division during World War II and lived in Algeria during that country's war for independence. He was a mountain climber and a deep-sea diver. “I idolized him,” Harry wrote. “I still do.”

The Army granted Devert leave to visit his ailing father in France, but before he could depart, news arrived that his father had died. “Harry screamed and thrust his fist through the door and just ran out of the house and ran for hours,” his mother recalls. “I always felt that when he started traveling, it was to escape all those memories. And the chances he took—I sometimes thought it would be the same to him if he died, because that's where his father is.”

A couple of years after his father died in 1999, Devert moved to south Florida. He had invested the money he inherited from his father in the stock market and discovered a knack for day-trading. Linda Raschke, a hedge-fund trader, recruited him to run her chat room in Wellington, Florida. He moved into an apartment complex in West Palm Beach with a pool and went to work in Wellington 12 hours a day. But something was amiss. When he was leaving for work, the young traders in his building were just getting home from partying. They made a couple thousand dollars in a day and were drinking beer at the pool by noon.

After six months, Devert quit the hedge fund to join them. He made hundreds of thousands of dollars a year and blew through all of it. While other traders invested in real estate, purchased engagement rings or saved money to open a firm, Devert invested in Burberry pants, Dolce & Gabbana sunglasses and a collection of Cartier watches.

“He spent all his money on nightclubs and girls,” his mother says. “He didn't have much that was concrete to show for it. He was like Mr. Miami.”

By 2007, algorithms that could predict the market rendered traders like Devert nearly obsolete. His friends cashed out and found other work. He moved to Paris and then Barcelona for a year, living the life of a beach bum, day-trading for spending money until he lost the shirt off his back. He would tell people the market crash made him a humbler person.

When Sean Axani opened his door to welcome Devert to his home in Fort Lauderdale, he noticed his old friend's riding jacket was shredded. Devert turned down a replacement. He preferred to wear the one he had. It had been years since they'd seen each other, and Devert was different. The flashy personality was gone, the clothes were casual, the conversation understated. They had drinks beside Axani's swimming pool, and Devert said he wanted a family. This was going to be his last adventure.

Schiear flew down for a visit. They walked on the beach and talked about what they wanted out of life. He had built up in his mind the notion that his trip would make him a success, and now he was afraid of failure. She told him not to put too much pressure on himself to make a career out of his trip. On their last day together in Miami,

Devert told her he loved her, and after a tearful good-bye they made plans to meet in Guatemala.

He made one last stop, in Tampa, to see Daniella McClutchy, an ex-girlfriend who had just given birth to her second child. He talked about wanting a family, but when it came time to leave, he couldn't wait to get out the door. “It was that inner demon he was always battling,” McClutchy says. “It's like an addiction. This fear of missing a good time was really something Harry always battled.”

He raced to New Orleans in time for Christmas and from there made it to the Mexican border in two days. He entered Mexico on December 28, 2013, commemorating the achievement on Instagram with a photo of a muddy road and a caption: “After crossing the border at Matamoros in the morning I spent the rest of the day getting chased by stray dogs...speeding by horses and chickens on the side of the road...dodging crater-size potholes...at military checkpoints...and riding on roads like these (this is actually one of the better ones). Made it to Tampico caked up to my waist in mud...parts of my bike falling off from the crazy roads...perfect excuse for a night filled with tequila and beer with some locals I met. Wouldn't have it any other way. Forgot how much I loved Mexico.”

For generations, the people of the village of Macheros in the green mountains of central Mexico have witnessed one of the world's great natural wonders: the annual arrival of millions of monarch butterflies. Howard Joe, a radiation oncologist from Victoria, British Columbia, and his girlfriend took a vacation to Macheros to see the butterflies.

After riding horses up a long rocky trail to the summit of Cerro Pelón on January 24, 2014, the first thing they noticed was a bearded man in a hooded sweatshirt and sweatpants, lying in the middle of the trail. “It was really strange, because we'd just gone two hours up a mountain, and here was this white dude in the middle of the forest by himself. He wasn't very talkative,” says Joe. “He was almost hypnotized by these butterflies, which were flying all over him and all around us.”

Devert had been sprawled there scribbling notes about his travels in a notepad all morning, recalling the 27 days he had already spent in Mexico, from caving alone in the Sierra Madres to visiting the ancient city of Teotihuacán. He had made his way through the rough-and-tumble state of Michoacán (where his mother had studied abroad when she was 19) and hiked to the top of Parícutín, the youngest volcano in the world.

Omar Martínez, a friend Devert had met in Barcelona, invited him to the *charrería*, a rodeo competition in his hometown of Uriangato, Guanajuato. When Martínez's *charrería* team advanced to the finals, Devert made up his mind to come back the next weekend to watch.

“Harry didn't consider factors like risk or time,” Martínez says. “Where he went was simply a matter of what he wanted to



see and experience. Beyond noticing the danger, it was a matter of being more worried about the richness of the experience ahead than getting bogged down in concerns about his safety."

When Devert found out that Howard Joe had come from Zihuatanejo, a city on the Pacific coast, he lit up. The final scene of *The Shawshank Redemption*, one of his favorite films, is set in Zihuatanejo. He decided on the spot to make it his next destination, asking, "What's the fastest way there?"

The safe way is via the turnpike, Joe said, pointing at Morelia on a road map and tracing the line that curved downward to the coast. Devert didn't like the looks of the route. It would mean backtracking 95 miles to Morelia and paying a toll. "What's it like going straight?" he asked, pointing to another route to the coast along Route 51 and Route 134. Joe shook his head, warning him that the locals said it was nothing but potholes and bandits. Devert looked up from the map and repeated the words *potholes* and *bandits*. "Sounds like fun," he said, grinning.

"He seemed to be someone who really wanted adventure," Joe says. "Oh, people with guns? Okay, that might be kind of cool. Or potholes? Yeah, I'd like to negotiate that on my bike."

Devert's serenity amused one of the other

visitors that day, Jen Newenham, an ecologist from South Africa, enough that she took a photograph of him. It is believed to be the last photo taken of him alive.

The gas station attendant watched the lone rider on a green motorcycle come around a blind curve on Route 51 just north of Huetamo, six soldiers following behind him perched on an Army Motorized Patrol vehicle. The rider pulled off the road and didn't notice until it was too late that the attendants were washing the concrete in front of the pumps.

The bike slid one way and its rider bailed to the other, jogging with momentum until coming to a stop. The attendant remembers how the rider laughed, took off his helmet and flashed a smile. He picked the bike up off its side and pushed it over to the pumps.

"Zihuatanejo, muchachos!" the rider shouted.

The army patrol drew to a stop beside the diesel pumps a hundred feet away. The soldiers were from the 90th Infantry Battalion, stationed 35 miles away at a military installation in Tiquicheo.

About an hour earlier, back at the base, the lieutenant in command of the patrol had noticed the motorcycle, equipped with

saddlebags, and called for its rider to halt. He asked the rider for his name and occupation, where he was coming from and where he was going. Devert gave his name, said he was a writer from New York and that his destination was the World Cup in Brazil.

"Your proximate destination," the lieutenant barked.

"Ah, the beach in Lázaro Cárdenas," Devert said.

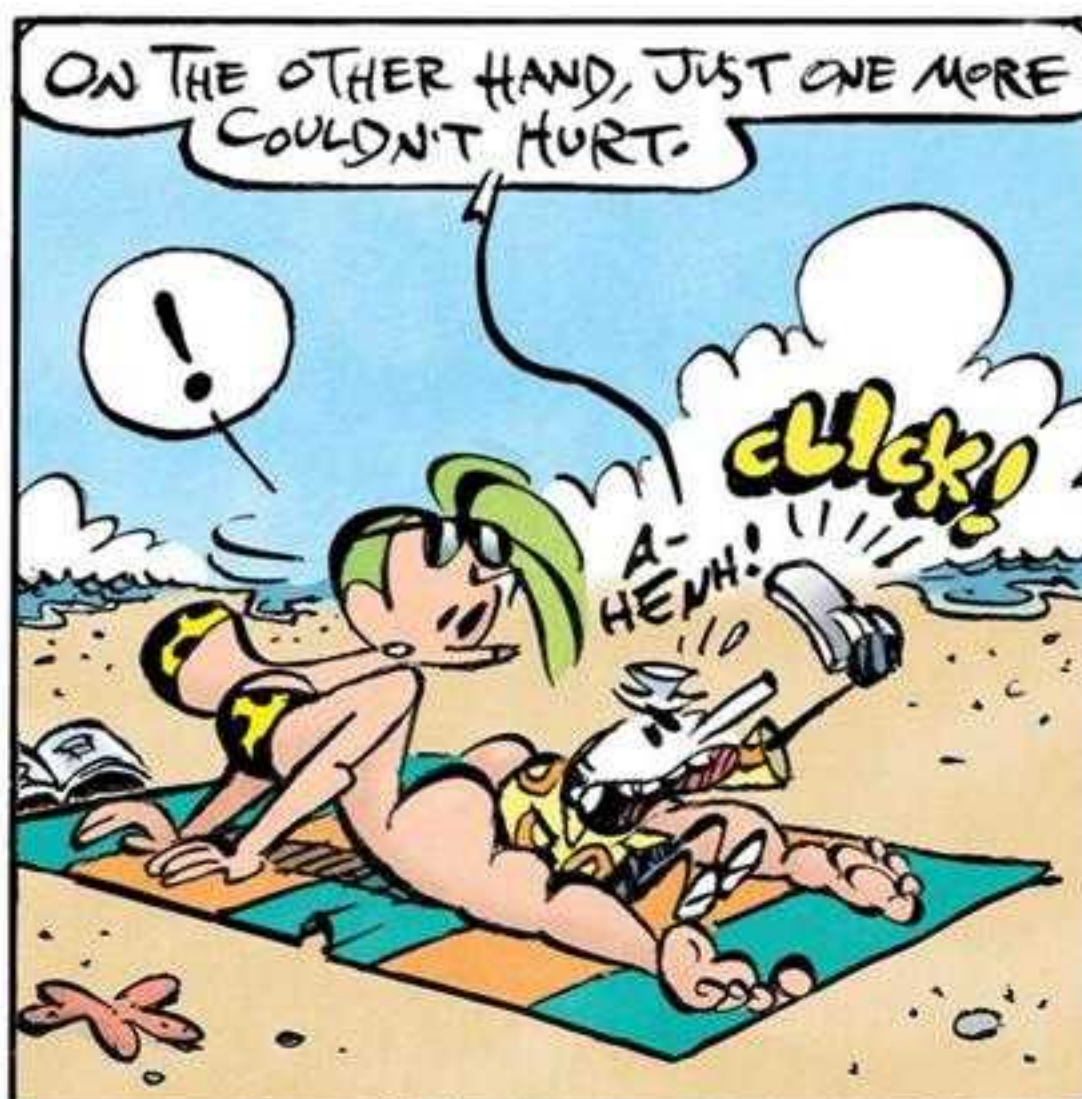
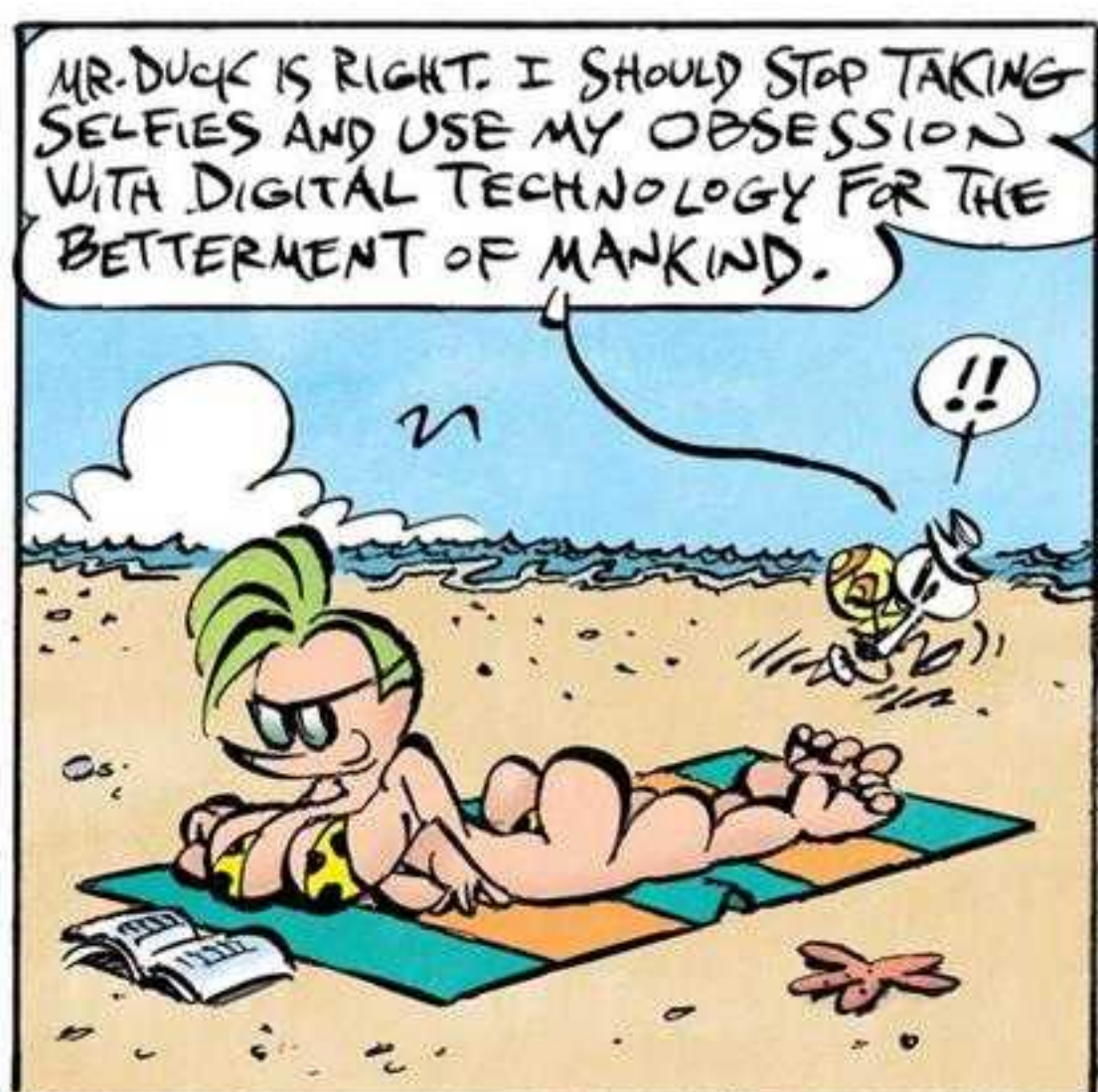
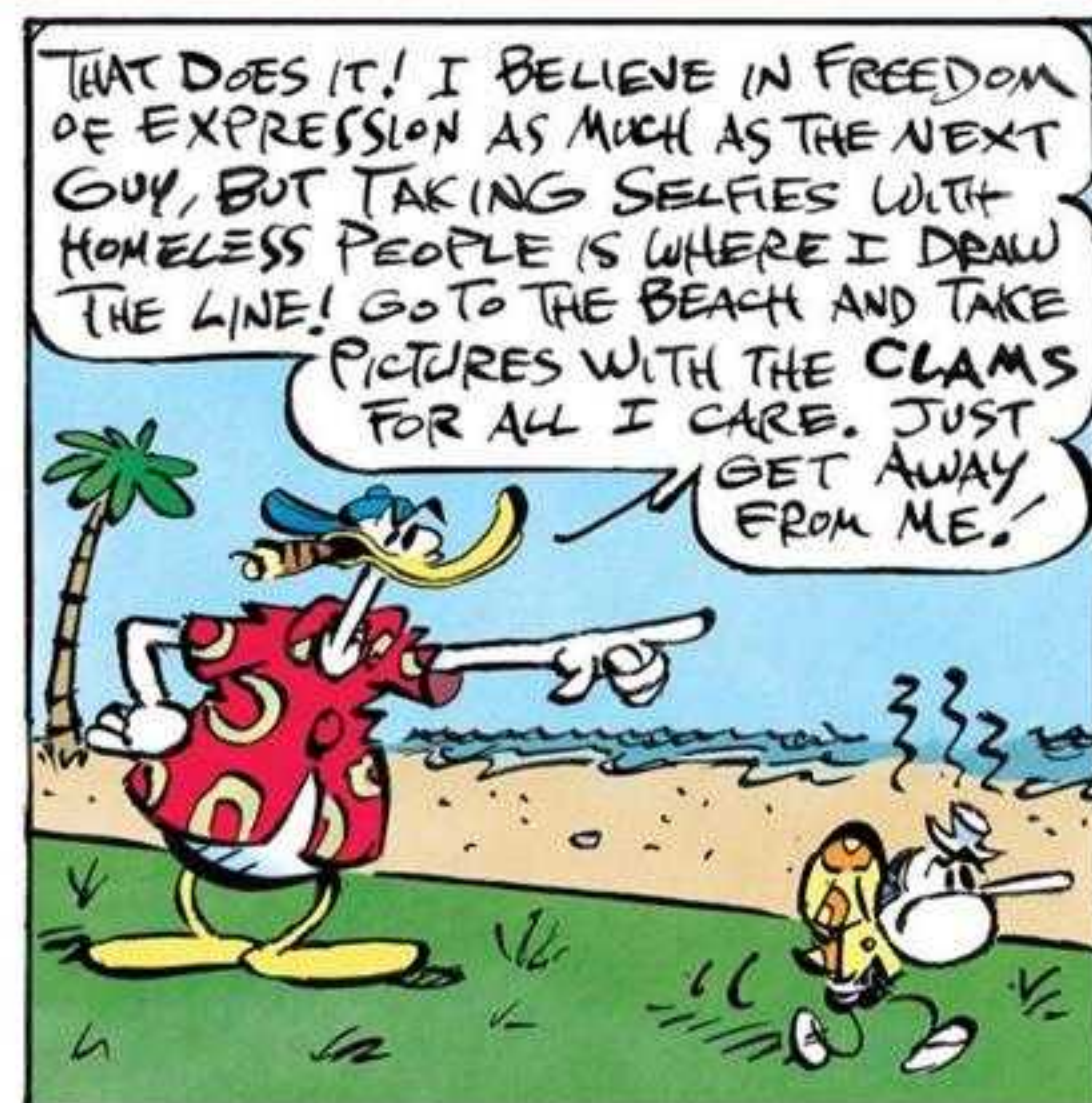
This was not the truth. Devert's destination was Zihuatanejo, a hub of surfer beaches, coastal lagoons and crystal-blue bays an hour east of Lázaro, an industrial port city similar to Long Beach, California. Maybe he changed his plans or shot wide of the mark on purpose because he didn't like the question.

The colonel in command of the battalion approached and admonished Devert to be cautious on the narrower road ahead, where vehicles bearing heavy loads raced by in the opposite direction. The colonel added one last piece of advice: "To avoid being robbed or assaulted, pay no attention to any civilians who order you to pull over."

Before leaving the base, the colonel had told the lieutenant, "Keep an eye on him all the way to Huetamo and make sure he arrives safely."

The lieutenant said he tried to do as he was told, but the American motorcyclist was

# Dirty Duck<sup>®</sup> by Bobby London





unpredictable. At first, he sped ahead. Then, at the village of Piedra China, the soldiers found him standing on the side of a bridge, taking photographs. At the crossroads in La Eréndira, he flew past the army patrol, and the lieutenant said they didn't catch up to him until he reached the gas station north of Huetamo. From there, the lieutenant claimed, he and his men proceeded into town to retrieve a replacement vehicle part, which had been their original assignment.

The pump attendant remembers it differently. The army escort arrived right behind Devert, he recalls, but then turned around and drove back in the direction of Tiquicheo. He watched Devert remove the GoPro camera from his helmet, set it on top of his bike and improvise a dance step as the camera filmed. He danced with his arms raised as if to feign the close embrace of a partner. "Sort of a *cumbia*," the attendant remembers.

For the first time in three days Devert had cell phone service, and he saw a new message from Schiear on WhatsApp. "It was some personal stuff," she says of her message. "I was telling him I did this little recipe story for *Esquire*. He was really excited about it. It was short, like, 'Oh, that's great, baby; you're amazing.'"

They chatted, fitting a ton of innuendo into a few hastily typed phrases, written with

hearts and smiley faces, calling each other babe and "lova." Then Devert changed the mood entirely.

"Just got an hour-and-a-half-long escort out of some area it was too dangerous for me to be. Stopping for lunch and...voila internet. Gonna get back on the road soon. Apparently there's another military escort waiting for me in some other town.... I'm running way late because of the crazy military stuff...hopefully get a chance to talk to you tonight when I (hopefully) finally arrive. Missing you. Mucho."

To Schiear, the message seemed like the windup for another adventure story. She didn't feel afraid, not at first, because nothing had ever happened to Devert that he hadn't been able to handle. On Sunday morning she was more annoyed than scared when she saw he still hadn't written. Devert contacted her nearly every day, but Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday came and went without a word. On Thursday, January 30, five days after her last contact with Devert, Schiear felt certain that something was wrong. "I walked into my apartment and I was like, I know he's not going to call. I just can't imagine my phone ringing."

She shared Devert's last message with his mom, whom she had never met. Ann was beginning to worry too; Devert had not phoned home to commemorate his late

father's birthday. Every January 29 for the previous 14 years Devert had phoned his mother, and they sang "Happy Birthday" over the phone in French. Devert would bake a cake wherever he happened to be.

A hacker friend in Pelham tracked down the GPS coordinates of where Devert had sent his final text message from: Huetamo. The jurisdiction for the military escort ended in the very spot where the patrol vehicle had allegedly stopped. A separate battalion of the Mexican army stationed in Huetamo reports it did not take part in any second escort for Devert. From that point on, he was on his own.

The danger in Tiquicheo was emblematic of the entire region. A phenomenon akin to nuclear fission was under way, only instead of an atom splitting and exploding it was a monolithic drug cartel called the Knights Templar. Thousands of army and federal police deployed to the area, and cartel leaders—once untouchable—were being arrested and killed. The pressure caused the nucleus of the cartel to split in two, creating a chain reaction of turf wars in dozens of municipalities in the state of Michoacán.

"If what is happening in Michoacán is not a war, it certainly looks like one," wrote reporter Verónica Calderón, a native of Michoacán, in *El País*.

When Devert steered his motorcycle back out onto Highway 51, the attendant watched him wave good-bye to the army escort and ride the last mile to Huetamo unescorted. This is where Devert's tracks fade from view. A second fuel attendant in Huetamo claims to have filled Devert's gas tank on the same day at a station only a quarter mile from the first.

In his seven years on the job, the second attendant believes, Devert was the first motorcyclist he had seen traveling Huetamo alone. When asked about the possibility of violence, the attendant does something locals do whenever the subject of the cartels comes up: He gestures toward the hills. From high up there, the cartel can see every movement down below.

"A military escort for a tourist who is alone will attract the wrong kind of attention," the attendant says, wiping his face.

In addition to the permanent army presence at the northern limits of town, the federal police had set up camp in the Hotel María Isabel Valmar downtown 10 days before Devert arrived. A nest of sandbags on either side of the hotel entrance announces the temporary barracks. It is the peak of midday heat, and the police commander in Huetamo sits with an adjutant officer at a glass table beside the dipping pool.

The commander has just finished saying that drug traffickers don't bother tourists because they make millions from exporting marijuana and opium; they don't rob for the sake of robbery. Devert's expensive gear—his motorcycle, GoPro camera, laptop, camera and iPhone—along with his French and American passports and billfold holding thousands of pesos, were liable to arouse suspicion, not envy. To organized crime in Mexico, a corpse is more valuable than



"Hi. I'm Larry and I'm totally in favor of women being in charge of their own reproductive rights."



goods, especially an American corpse, the commander says. Dumping a body in enemy territory forces the government to enter the area, ask a lot of questions and clean up the zone, thereby weakening the enemy.

"There were rumors of DEA agents in the area," he says. "To go around filming people back then was suicidal."

In Pelham, Ann posted a message to Devert's Facebook page, appealing to her son's 1,848 friends: "Has anybody heard from Harry?"

Nobody had.

Ann, Schiear and a host of volunteers created the Facebook page #HelpFindHarry to gather tips and coordinate a search in Mexico. Nearly 30,000 Facebook users around the world joined the page and volunteered to help. A notice on Devert's disappearance that the U.S. Department of State posted online attracted an astonishing 600,000 page views. Sympathizers were attracted by Devert's Instagram photos, his effusive essays on the virtue of adventure, his outlandish motorcycle journey and the mysterious circumstances of his disappearance.

Those factors also turned Devert's disappearance into gripping TV. The story was binational: CNN en Español broadcast the smiling face of the American motorcyclist beside a map of the war zone he'd traversed in Mexico, and the national TV news channels in Mexico broadcast daily updates on the search. The legend of El Trotamundos, the missing American wanderer, was born.

Soon the #HelpFindHarry Facebook group received tips from anonymous accounts with names such as Courage for Michoacán and For a Free La Huacana, warning that Devert had been mistaken for a DEA agent and been picked up at a cartel checkpoint. On February 12, 18 days after Devert's disappearance, Facebook user For a Free La Huacana posted, "I heard they thought he was with the DEA and they took him away only for questioning. But the heat has come down and now they don't know what to do." Other users claimed the Knights Templar cartel invented this story to sow discord in the ranks of its enemies.

On February 21, a feature article about Devert appeared in *Excelsior*, a major daily newspaper in Mexico City. The headline read AMERICAN MOTORCYCLIST DISAPPEARED IN GUERRERO, NOT MICHOACÁN. The story claimed a law-enforcement source with knowledge of the investigation told the newspaper that Devert had arrived safely at the Pacific coast of Guerrero, only to be kidnapped after a meal in Troncones, a surfer town 20 minutes from Zihuatanejo.

The source of the information was Bryan Jiménez, alias Cheeks, a local hoodlum who offered the information during police questioning. Jiménez claimed Devert's arrival had aroused the suspicion of El Tigre, a crime boss who runs the drug rackets in Zihuatanejo. El Tigre, whose real name is Adrián Reyes Cárdenas, had worked for the Knights Templar but became its enemy after he and another cartel member left to form a breakaway group. They adopted the name the Guardians of Guerrero.

Jiménez, who worked for El Tigre,

claimed his boss had Devert picked up after suspecting he was a DEA agent. The *Excelsior* report claimed that Devert was interrogated at a ranch called La Palma near the city of Petatlán, about an hour away from Troncones, and that El Tigre himself was spotted riding Devert's motorcycle.

Locals in Troncones find this story hard to believe; they say the kidnapping of a foreign tourist in town would not have gone unnoticed or unreported. The U.S. Embassy did its own follow-up and told Ann that Bryan Jiménez, the key witness in the story, was a fictitious person; however, the federal registry lists a prisoner named Bryan Jiménez as being held in a maximum-security federal prison in the state of Nayarit. A federal investigator says the sighting of Devert was "unconfirmed."

Confirmed or not, the *Excelsior* report immediately turned El Tigre and the Guardians of Guerrero into the prime suspects in Devert's disappearance and made enough of an impact to elicit a public denial. On March 23, the Guardians of Guerrero posted on their Facebook page: "Who are these stupid fucking people who blame us for the disappearance of the American Harry Devert? One more time, we'll make it clear to our Facebook followers: The Guardians of Guerrero did not kidnap him. He disappeared before he made it to Zihuatanejo, which is why it couldn't have been us.... The Knights Templar have him and they did this to fuck us over and turn up the heat on us, but they fucked up because the whole search is going on in the area where he disappeared, and that is why we aren't worried."

The argument between cartels was not confined to social media. On March 28, the Mexican army rushed to take down four banners that appeared on a stretch of highway in La Unión, reading EL TIGRE IS INVOLVED IN THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EL TROTAMUNDOS! They were signed *Pueblos Liberados* ("Liberated Peoples"), a previously unknown group that claims to be a civilian self-defense guard against organized crime.

Ann viewed the banners with skepticism. "My thinking was that the banners were just trying to shove the blame somewhere

away from where it belonged," she says. In fact, when Mexican authorities arrested the leaders of Liberated Peoples a year later, a well-known enforcer for the Knights Templar was among them.

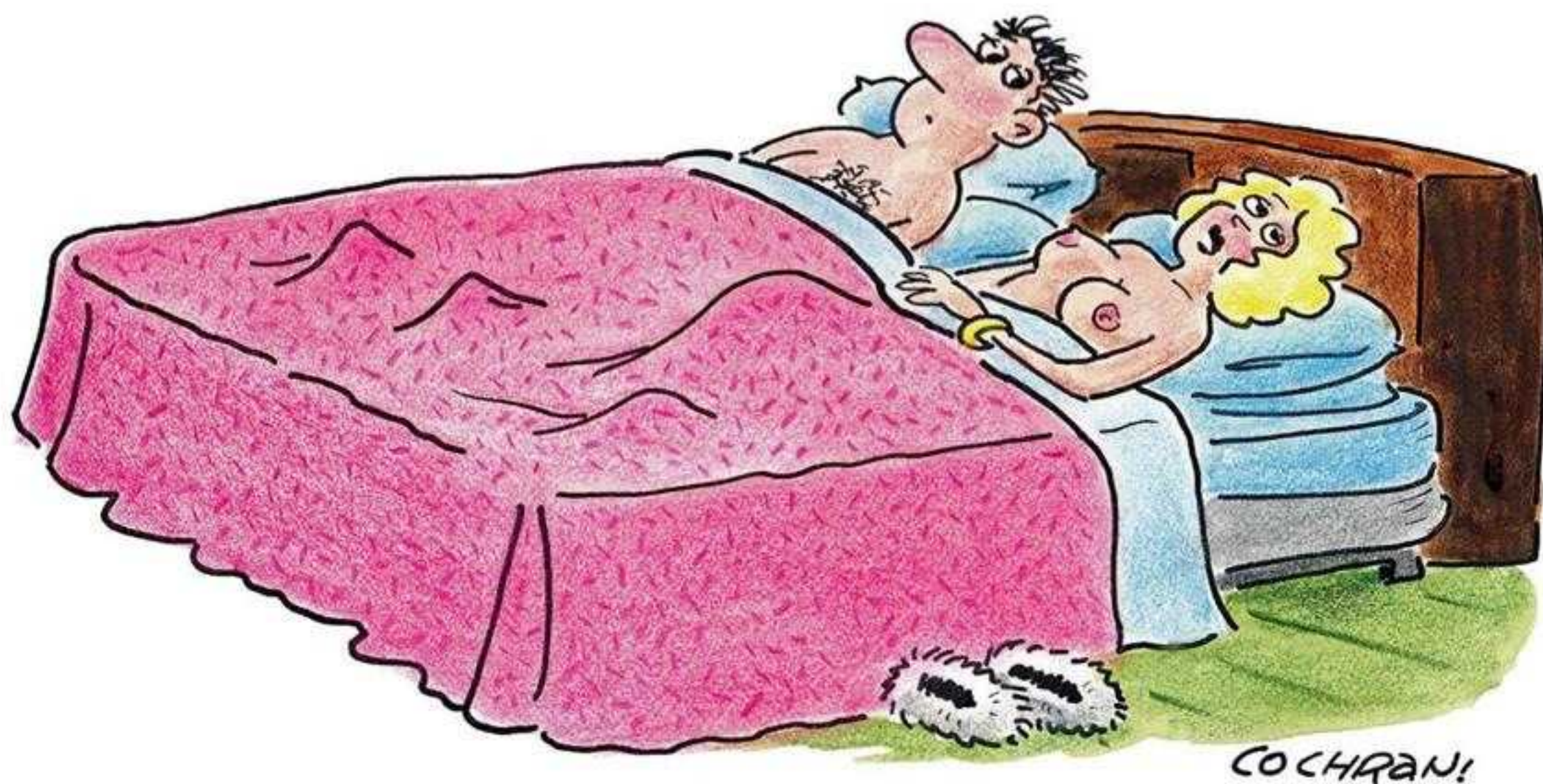
On April 21, 2014, the Guardians of Guerrero responded with four banners of their own: WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE AMERICAN AND WE KNOW FOR CERTAIN THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR DID IT FOR STRATEGIC REASONS.

The banners also claimed the Guardians of Guerrero had wrested the eastern half of the municipality of La Unión from the Knights Templar. An unconfirmed April 2014 report claimed the Guardians attacked a Knights Templar stronghold, kidnapped four inhabitants and tortured them to find out where the body of Harry Devert was buried.

When federal crime investigators opened the trash bags stashed alongside Devert's motorcycle near the beach in La Majahua, they found a jigsaw puzzle of bones, teeth, clothing and a motorcycle helmet. The trash bags were clean on the outside, but the remains and clothing inside were coated in a thick layer of dried mud, an indication the body was originally buried somewhere else (probably near the area it was found, according to official sources). The rider's leather jacket and boots were missing. He was buried in his socks.

John Doe had been dead anywhere from two to six months. The body had decomposed so thoroughly that scientists had no soft tissue to inspect for marks of torture. The fingers and thumb were missing from the left hand. The right hand was nowhere to be found. The skull was broken into 16 pieces, but there was no sign of a bullet wound. He was bludgeoned to death, and the fatal blow damaged the part of the brain stem that regulates breathing. The victim died from a shortage of oxygen to the heart.

Ann flew to Mexico for a DNA test. She didn't need the results to know it was her son. She recognized his string bracelets the second the examiner pulled them out of a little manila envelope. DNA tests indicated



"Nothing personal, Marvin, but I think you should put your name on the waiting list for a penis transplant."



with more than 99 percent certainty that Ann Devert was the mother of John Doe.

"One of them showed me the pictures of the skeleton they put back together, and I realized it did not horrify me," Ann says. "My own imagination was a lot worse. And seeing his bones, which I hadn't planned on doing, also held no horror for me. Because it wasn't Harry anymore, it was only his bones."

At a press conference one week after the discovery, Iñaky Blanco Cabrera, attorney general for the state of Guerrero, revealed that a significant amount of marijuana and cocaine had been recovered at the scene. The amount of drugs was a closely kept secret until now. Crime-scene technicians found a cellophane bag containing dozens of individual doses of cocaine, half a gram each—two thirds of an ounce in all—ready to be sold, according to sources. One of the two trash bags at the scene held 30 pounds of marijuana.

The whispers haven't reached Ann directly, but a reliable source informed her what officials in the Mexican government have said in private—that Harry Devert was a drug trafficker. The rumors about him surfaced long before his body did: Why else would a lone biker ride through a cartel war zone? The drugs found at the crime scene strengthened the insinuation.

But law-enforcement officials concur that the crime scene was tampered with and

that the body was moved from somewhere else, which leads Ann to question where the drugs came from. "They moved the body from its original location to the field where it was found, where the earth had not been disturbed, and the terrain there did not correspond to the body and bike," she says. "That's why the drugs are laughable, because you can't move yourself after you're deceased and take drugs with you."

Officials also found a payment ledger marked "Knights Templar/Pueblos Librados" containing the nicknames of a dozen leading members of the cartel in the area. A cash amount in Mexican pesos was jotted beside each nickname in a separate column. The second page contained the record of two large cocaine transactions: a payment of 100,000 pesos to someone called the Teacher, and another for 300,000 pesos to El Chapulín. Both the payments, the ledger indicates, were withdrawn from "the cocaine account." The third page included records of regular payments owed to "look-outs" paid to report on suspicious activity in 10 different towns spread out along the coastal highway to Zihuatanejo, including the village of Lagunillas, about 400 yards from the abandoned pasture where Devert's body was dumped.

This January Ann traveled to Mexico to observe the one-year anniversary of Harry's final days and to get answers. She paid

homage to her son in Macheros, hiking up to the monarch butterfly preserve, where she buried two string bracelets of his that were included with his remains. Then she took a bus to the Office of the General Prosecutor in Morelia to see the homicide file.

Worried investigators warned her not to tell anyone where she was or what she was doing. According to Ann, documents in the homicide file suggest that investigators do not believe Harry was kidnapped in Troncones, as the *Excelsior* article claimed, but at a checkpoint on the highway at the northern limits of Nueva Italia, Michoacán, after which he was brought to a safe house in Zicuirán.

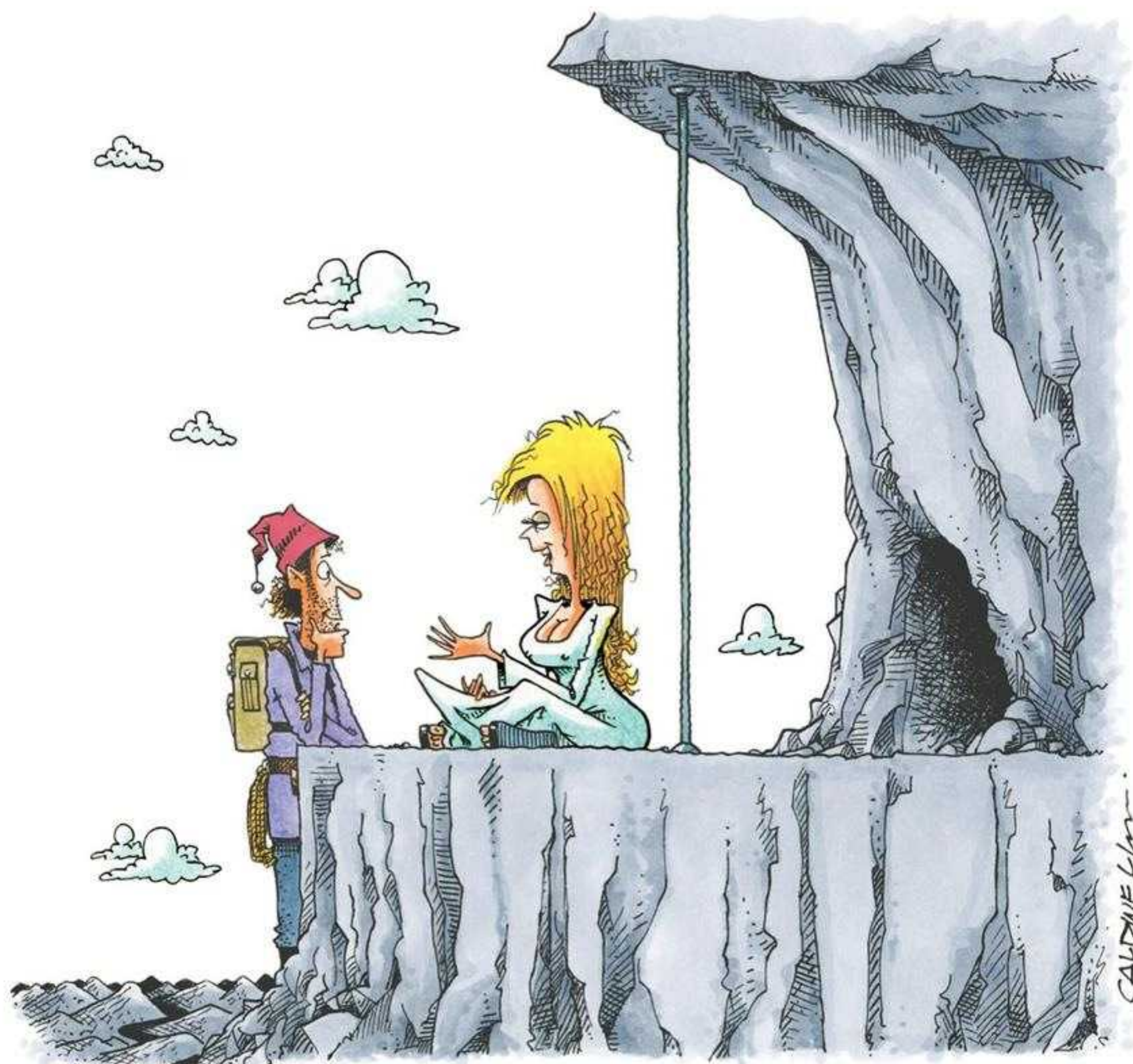
The information came from an anonymous witness who, the file indicates, came forward of his own volition a month after Devert's disappearance. The prime suspect is a drug trafficker from Michoacán who is suspected of exporting an average of two tons of crystal meth per month to Dallas, Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Jose, California. The suspect was an associate of the Knights Templar until a falling-out one month before Devert arrived. The men under the suspect, the informant said, boast that they have the support of the federal police and the Mexican army.

These were the men stationed at the checkpoint in Nueva Italia when Devert appeared on the afternoon of January 25, en route to the coast. "They signaled for him to pull over and, upon confirming that he is American, transported him to Zicuirán to investigate whether or not he was working for the DEA," the informant claimed.

Mexican federal investigators performed a background check on the men named in the statement and found records for three canceled arrest warrants in Mexico and two drug arrests in San Jose, California. A note left in the file by one of the investigators mentions that the suspect donated \$17 million to the election campaign of the governor of Michoacán.

After delaying nearly four months, a federal police investigator finally traveled to La Huacana in June to investigate the assertions made by the anonymous informant. He drove his department-issued white pickup truck to the towns of Zicuirán and El Chauz and detected no sign of a checkpoint. In town, he questioned locals about the men who allegedly work for the suspect. They said they had never heard of them. Back in Morelia, Ann Devert was told in plain language that the people who killed her son will never be caught.

"I wanted to tell my friends and loved ones (who really are the same thing because I love all my friends) that I died doing what I loved, and while I knew I couldn't keep escaping death forever, that I at least hoped to keep it up until I was nearly a hundred years old... but that I was okay with this. Our time here is so short, and many people I have known have passed on before their time, people better than myself.... It would only be fair for me to have to go as well."—e-mail draft written by Harry Devert in 2012, found after his death



"Make up your mind, Chester. What's it gonna be? You want the meaning of life or a white-hot topless pole dance?"





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41505350

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LOT 69080 shown  
69030/69031/47737

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VALUE

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### 26", 4 DRAWER TOOL CART US+GENERAL

**WINNER** ★  
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LOT 95659 shown  
61634/61952

• 580 lb. Capacity

**SAVE \$180**

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### 9 PIECE FULLY POLISHED COMBINATION WRENCH SETS

**PITTSBURGH** SAE  
LOT 69043/42304 shown

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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

### 3 GALLON, 100 PSI OILLESS PANCAKE AIR COMPRESSOR

**CENTRAL PNEUMATIC**

**SAVE 55%**

LOT 95275 shown  
60637/61615

**\$39.99** ~~\$59.99~~  
REG. PRICE \$89.99

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### 10 FT. x 17 FT. PORTABLE GARAGE

LOT 69039 shown  
60727/62286

**SAVE OVER \$122**

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### 27 LED PORTABLE WORKLIGHT/FLASHLIGHT

LOT 67227 shown  
69567/60566/62532

**SAVE 62%**

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Batteries included.

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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

### 1.5 HP ELECTRIC POLE SAW

**CHICAGO ELECTRIC** OUTDOOR

**SAVE OVER \$35**

LOT 68862

**\$64** ~~\$74.99~~  
REG. PRICE \$99.99

• Extends from 6 ft. to 8 ft. 10"

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**SUPER COUPON**

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### RAPID PUMP® 3 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK

LOT 69227/62116  
62584/62590/68048 shown

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• Weighs 74 lbs.

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**SUPER COUPON**

### PREDATOR GENERATORS

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• 70 dB Noise Level

LOT 68528/69729/69676 shown

LOT 69675/69728  
CALIFORNIA ONLY

**SAVE \$200**

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### HaulMaster

### 72" x 80" MOVER'S BLANKET

LOT 66537 shown  
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**SAVE 66%**

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**SUPER COUPON**

### FOLDABLE ALUMINUM SPORTS CHAIR

LOT 62314  
66383 shown

• 250 lb. Capacity

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**WOW SUPER COUPON**

### 18 VOLT CORDLESS 3/8" DRILL/DRIVER WITH KEYLESS CHUCK

**drillmaster**

LOT 69651  
68239 shown

**SAVE 54%**

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REG. PRICE \$34.99

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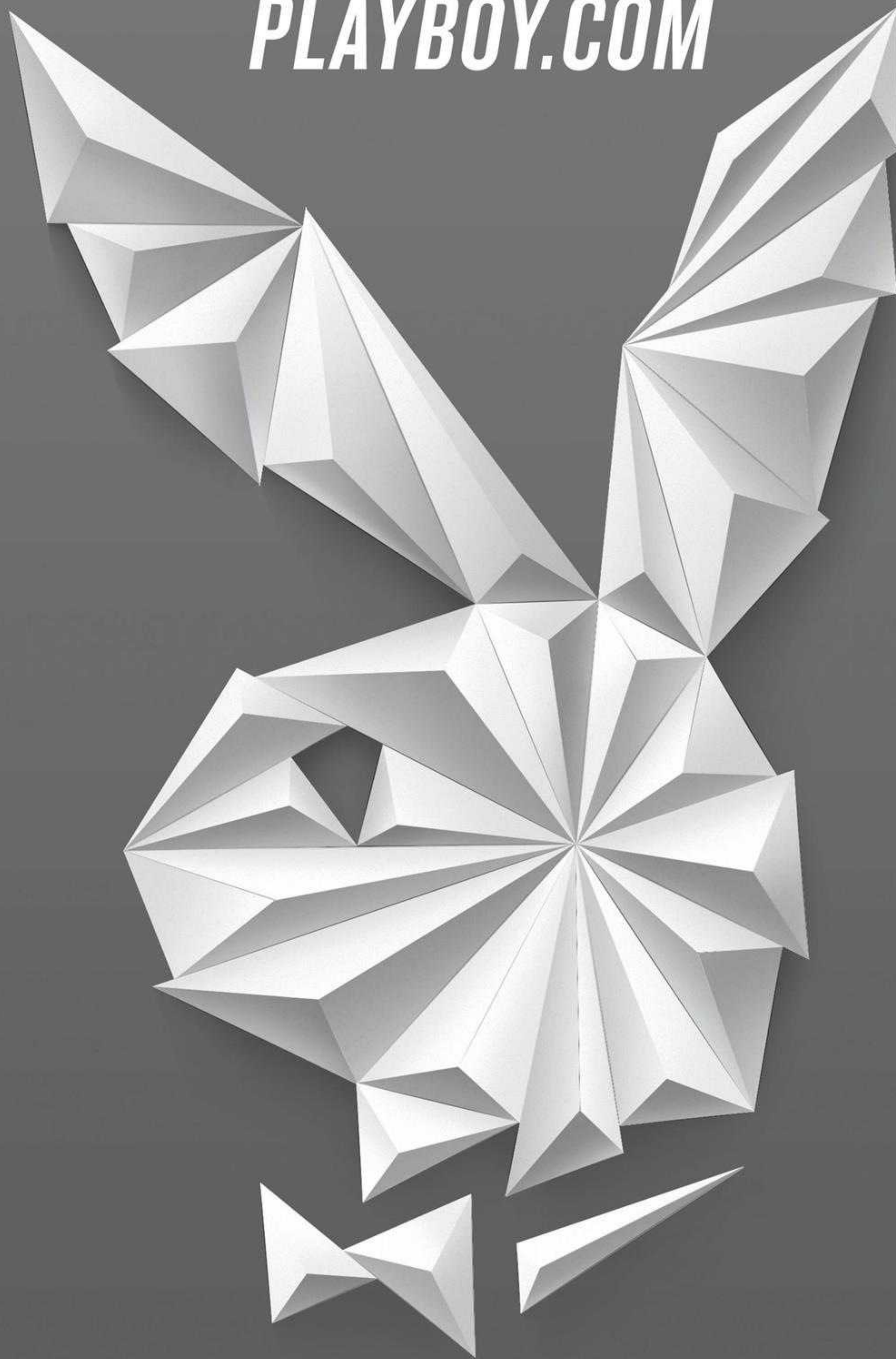
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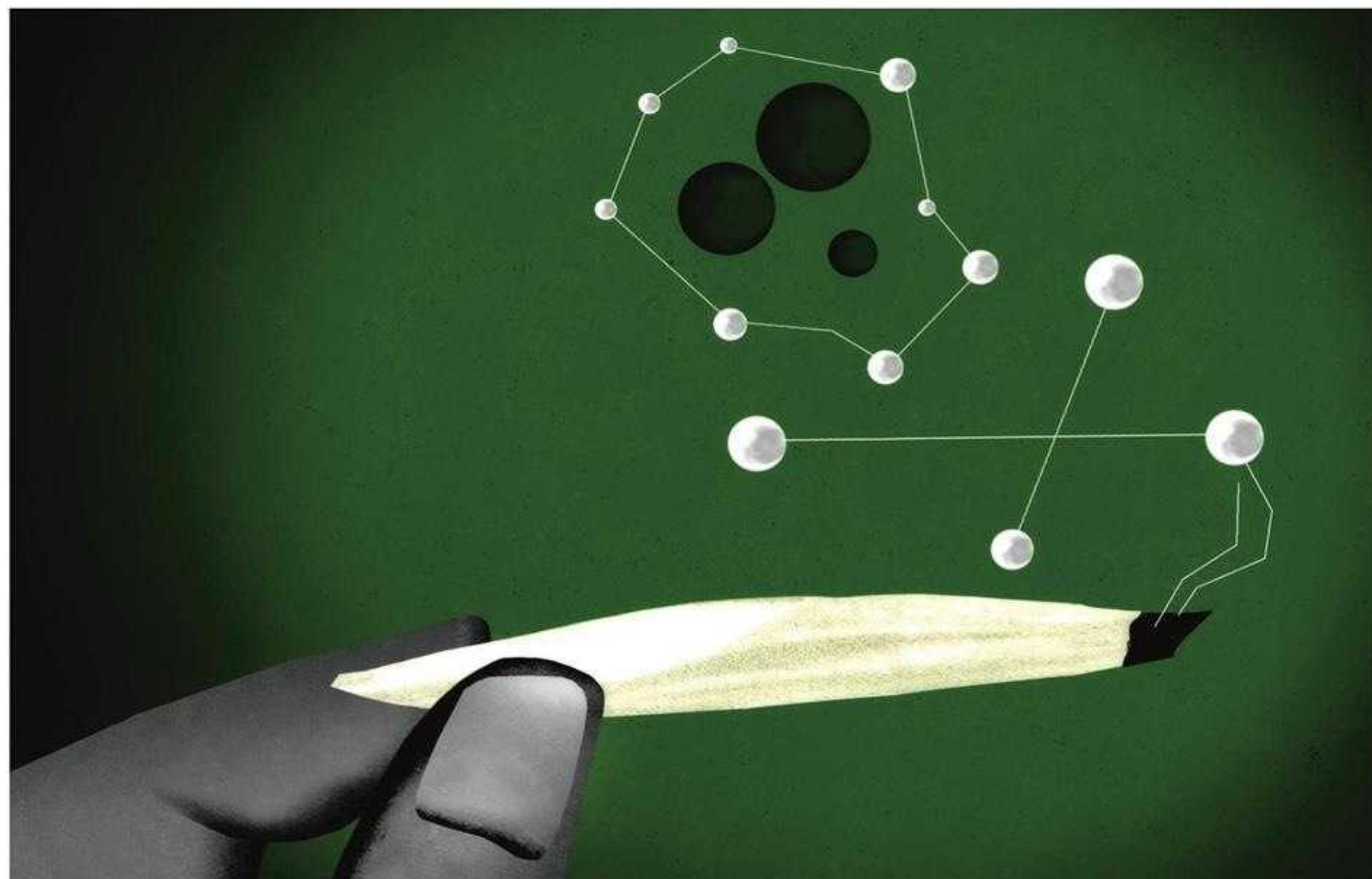
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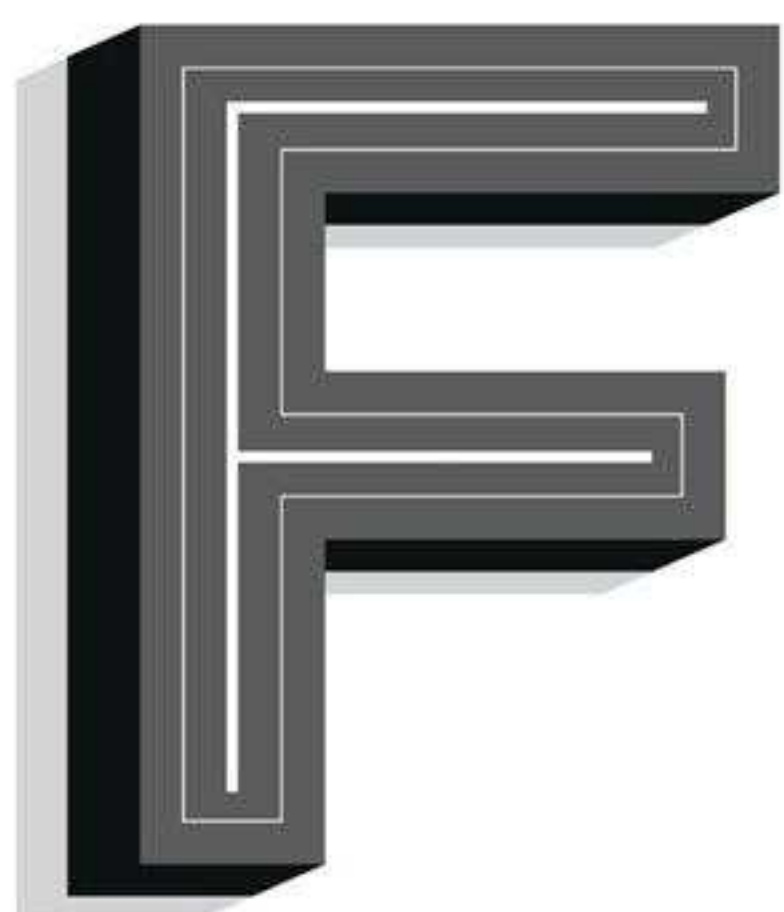
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BRIAN STAUFFER

## **LIFE AFTER D.A.R.E.**

*Basement chemists synthesized a marijuana alternative that's wreaking medical havoc. The tactics needed to fight it aren't your daddy's war on drugs*



Five years ago America was introduced to synthetic marijuana. After scientist John Huffman discovered that slightly altering the chemical formula for cannabinoids could achieve effects similar to those of THC, drug makers jerry-rigged his findings and carted the result out to head shops and gas stations, and a nation under strict

drug prohibition toked up. Its unregulated production is reminiscent of bathtub meth: Chemicals from Chinese factories are mixed with other chemicals, sprayed on plant mulch, packaged and shipped off to be sold and smoked. By achieving neurological effects similar to those of marijuana but without the legal consequences, shady chemists created a hit.

Before long, their hit became a medical nightmare. In 2010 synthetic marijuana caused an estimated 11,406 emergency-room visits nationwide; in 2011 the number jumped to 28,531. Most alarming is the drug's child-friendly marketing, with brand names that sound like

cereal: Scooby Snax, Spice, LOL and Galaxy Gold.

Lance Dyer is the most prominent figure in the crusade against the drug. Along with the organization Warriors Against Synthetic Pot, he descended on the Texas state capitol this February to lobby for stricter enforcement. The Georgia native's motivation is personal. Three years ago his 14-year-old son, Dakota, who had no prior mental health or drug issues, fatally shot himself in the head after, his father claims, he smoked a synthetic cannabinoid. Dyer and his wife held their son as he took his final breaths; one month later, Dyer sold his small business and has spent

the years since advocating for tougher legislation.

Instead of banning synthetic marijuana outright, legislators banned the specific molecular structures of synthetic cannabi-

noids. Manufacturers played cat-and-mouse in response, tweaking their product to create compounds not targeted by the laws. Before long, the DEA stepped in, applied the Federal Analogue Act, which bans

chemicals "substantially similar" to controlled substances, then began a law-enforcement sweep named Project Synergy I & II. By 2014 more than 377 importers had been arrested and hundreds of kilograms of synthetic pot, along with more than \$71 million in cash and assets, had been seized.

The drug's popularity has fallen since its peak in 2011, but Texas and some other states experienced a significant spike in use last year. Over one 48-hour period in Dallas in May 2014, 40 people were hospitalized due to the drug; in November, Austin had more than 25 hospitalizations. In 2012 Texas logged 71,069 arrests for marijuana possession, second only to New York out of the 48 states that report such data to the FBI. It's enough to make one wonder if users are forced to seek syn-

**Over one 48-hour period in Dallas in May 2014, 40 people were hospitalized due to the drug.**

thetic alternatives in the face of marijuana's outsize legal risk. Some attribute the sudden rise in use to a shift in supply: After the Project Synergy sweep, manufacturers began to import over the Mexican border instead of through the coasts.

Dyer and WASP are a new kind of antidrug crusader that emerged in the wake of the failed war on drugs and the liberalization of Americans' opinion of marijuana. WASP models itself after Mothers Against Drunk Driving; the comparison is dismaying given that MADD's prohibitionist campaigns are calculated for maximum public awareness (it has called for the arrest of bar patrons for public intoxication and campaigned against California's medical-marijuana proposition).

Dyer can seem equally calculating. After years of giving

BY  
JEFF  
WINKLER



legislative testimony, he has become media-polished, using the same language and teary voice each time he describes his son's death. Yet his approach and beliefs differ radically from those of his antidrug predecessors. He characterizes synthetic marijuana as an exceptional drug whose pharmacology and effect on the brain are not entirely known. Stories shared by WASP members highlight the terrifying effects it can have: the teenager whose heart stopped without apparent cause; the Navy veteran who was found on a soccer field, his

## Why not legalize natural weed so users aren't driven to alternatives?

left arm slit open and a packet of Spice nearby.

Puritanical champions of total drug prohibition have lost their standing among legislators and the American public. The model legislation WASP has written eschews punishing individual users, who are mostly kids, and targets manufacturers and peddlers instead. Dyer, for his part, does not target other "legal highs" such as kratom, a mild and naturally mood-altering leaf from a Southeast Asian tree; he merely wants to ensure that synthetic cannabinoids don't end up in it.

Dyer doesn't target marijuana either. Although he doesn't embrace pot, he supports its medical uses and believes prohibitionist efforts are ineffective. People will always get high. According to one university study, synthetic cannabinoids are, after marijuana, the most-used drug among high schoolers.

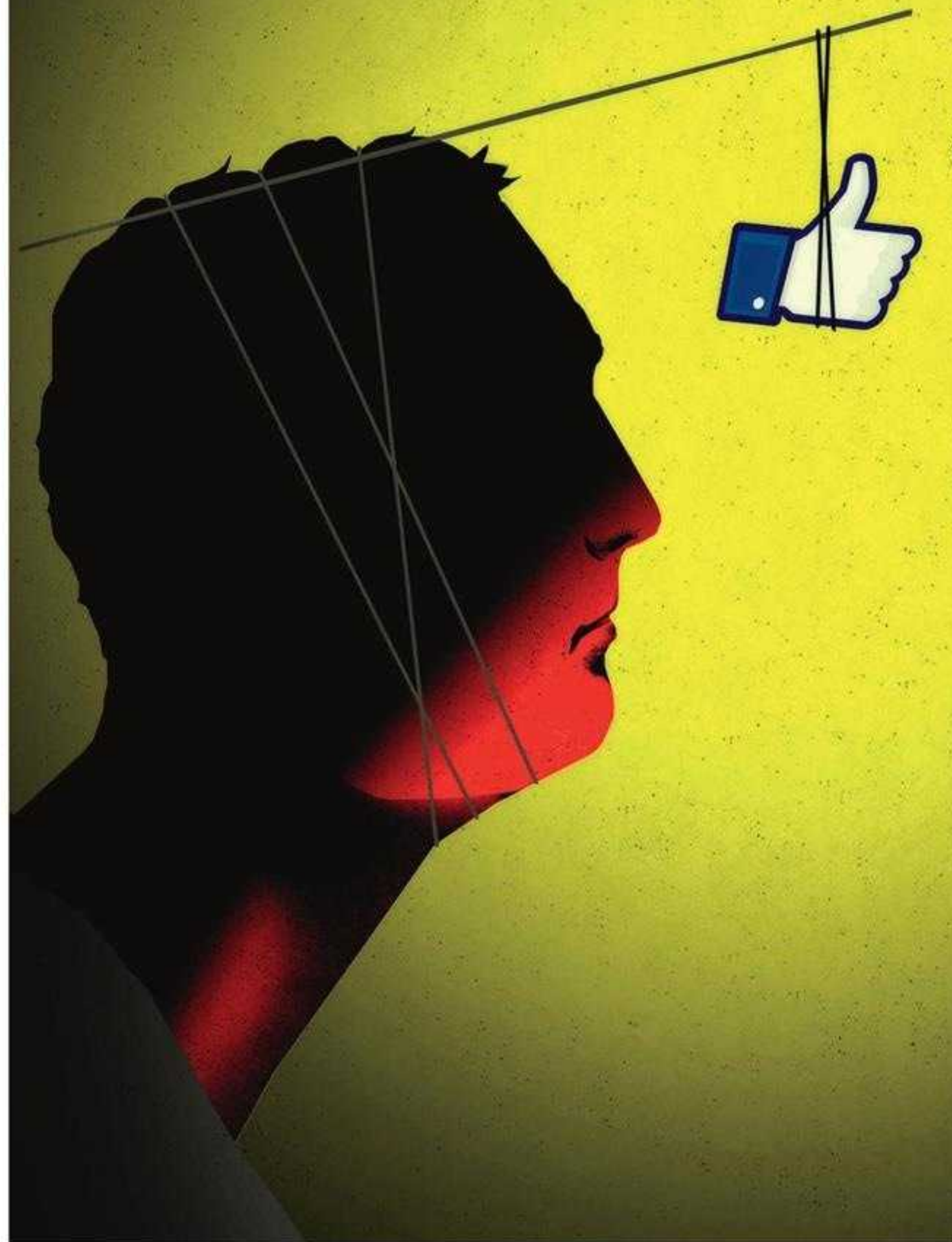


► Synthetic marijuana: Is it toxic to the core?

This suggests an obvious question: Why not legalize real, natural weed so users aren't driven to dangerous alternatives? Even inventor Huffman is dismayed at what his creation has become and supports marijuana legalization. Unsurprisingly, the marijuana industry supports antisynthetic efforts; even the DEA doesn't conflate synthetic marijuana with real marijuana. "There's never been an overdose on marijuana," said one DEA public relations officer. "We're even against calling it synthetic marijuana."

That isn't typical antidrug rhetoric, nor is Dyer's. The day after his capitol visit, he delivered a talk to schoolchildren in Atlanta that he emphasized wouldn't be a standard DARE lecture. "The first words they'll hear out of my mouth are 'I'm not giving you the don't-do-drugs speech; you hear that all the time,'" he told me. "I say, 'If you feel the need to try a mind-altering substance, if you succumb to peer pressure, don't do this one. Don't do synthetic cannabinoids.'"

As home chemists get savvier and the globalized drug industry makes it easier for new creations such as synthetic marijuana to take hold, it's clear the shift in approach is necessary. Not everything that's for sale can be assumed to be regulated. A successor to synthetic marijuana is sure to come, and as long as drug prohibition remains in effect in America, Dyer's is a message that even good, God-fearing potheads can get behind. ■



## OPTIMIZING YOUR MISERY

*Is your smartphone making you stupid? Relax, there's an app for that*

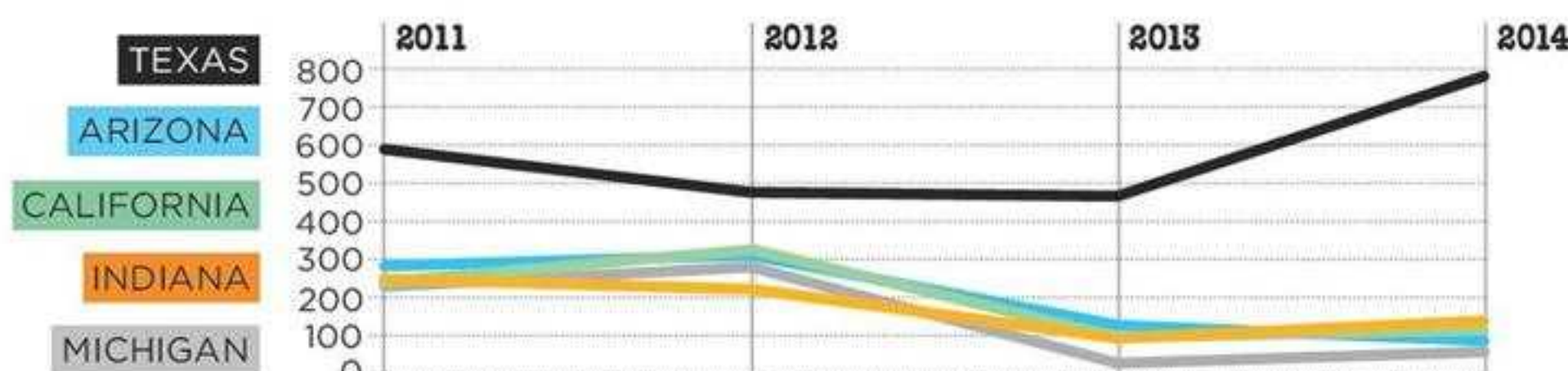


Every three months, Mark Zuckerberg gets on a conference call with his investors to brag about how much of the world's

mental bandwidth his company is monopolizing. It's an alarming amount. The average Facebook user spends 40 minutes a day liking, commenting, sharing and friending, mostly on mobile phones. Multiplied across Facebook's user base of 1.3 billion people, that's more than 850 million person-hours every day. The typical user of Instagram, which Facebook also owns, spends another 21 minutes each day bestowing tiny red hearts on other people's vacation photos. If you're

## DOPE IN THE HEART OF TEXAS

► Thirty state poison-control centers have disclosed their data on synthetic marijuana "exposures" (encounters between the centers and people who have used the drug). The five at right had the most incidents since 2011. In 2014 Texas had 782 cases—the most ever recorded.



| STATE TOTALS, 2011-2014 |       |
|-------------------------|-------|
| TEXAS                   | 2,308 |
| ARIZONA                 | 808   |
| CALIFORNIA              | 757   |
| INDIANA                 | 683   |
| MICHIGAN                | 594   |



one of the 280 million people who use both services, you probably burn a full hour each day “connecting” with friends or strangers through a three-by-five-inch pane of glass.

Then there’s Twitter, YouTube, Candy Crush, Snapchat, Clash of Clans, Tinder and Vine. There’s plain old e-mail and text messaging and Google Maps and—God help you—podcasts. If there’s a category of your life that can’t currently be conducted, expedited or simulated on a smartphone, you can be reasonably certain there’s a team of well-funded Stanford drop-outs in a converted Silicon Valley warehouse prototyping it right now. The quantity of financial and intellectual capital pouring into the development of sticky smartphone apps makes the Manhattan Project look like a science fair. The frivolity of many of these apps belies their technical sophistication: The algorithm underlying Facebook’s News Feed crunches more than 100,000 variables before deciding whether to show you your co-worker’s baby photos or that fake skydiving-elephant video first.

Thanks to the efforts of all these lavishly compensated geniuses, fiddling with our phones has been elevated from a bad habit to a lifestyle. The average American spends a total of three hours a day fussing with a mobile phone, making it our third most time-consuming activity after sleep and work. Those figures swell to grotesque proportions in younger cohorts. One recent survey of college students found them on their phones eight to 10 hours a day; in another survey, text messaging alone consumed more than three hours.

The health effects of this mass shift in behavior are only just coming into focus. Heavy phone use has been shown to cause neck and shoulder pain, eye strain, headaches and repetitive

stress injuries to the thumb and wrist. Texting while driving is a major contributor to traffic deaths, and hospitals report rising numbers of accidents from texting while walking. Chronic stress and sleep problems are contributing factors in a wide range of maladies, from heart disease to weakened immune systems; round-the-clock smartphone use has been linked to both. Then there’s the effect on productivity. By encouraging us to multitask and fragmenting our already perilously divided attention, our apps tax our finite cognitive resources. One study showed that receiving a notification for an unread e-mail while working decreases our effective IQ by 10 points. The phones get smarter; we get dumber.

Compulsive sensation-seeking despite mounting self-harm: That’s pretty much the definition of addiction. Yet this generation of tech-company leaders frame themselves not as drug dealers or junk-food peddlers but as saviors. In the utopian ideal of Silicon Valley, “making the world a better place” is a cliché no one is ever embarrassed to recycle. Nobody talks in terms of profit, only about “serving the needs of the user.” Sometimes it gets absurd: Asked why he wears a plain gray T-shirt every day, Zuckerberg once said it was so he’d be

► Mark Zuckerberg’s monotonous outfits don’t make the man.

## ***Compulsive sensation-seeking despite self-harm: That’s the definition of addiction. Yet tech-company leaders frame themselves not as drug dealers but as saviors.***

free to “make as few decisions as possible about anything except how to best serve this community.”

Imagine if the CEO of a supermarket chain revealed that his customers were spending hours in his stores every week, emerging sick and dazed—and then claimed he was merely “serving the community.” Wouldn’t someone respond by suggesting that, just maybe, his stores needed a redesign?

The big difference, of course, is that grocery stores want something straightforward from you: your money. App makers want it too, but they mostly aren’t bold enough to ask for it; instead they rely on selling your time to advertisers. It’s a two-party transaction, and anything bad that happens to the third party—you, the user—is what economists call an externality, a consequence they have no incentive to

worry about. When there’s a runaway phenomenon that everyone deplores but no one knows how to stop—global warming, antibiotic overuse, 24-hour cable news—there’s usually an externality to blame.

The good news is that this is the sort of problem that contains the seeds of its own solution. The number of apps vying for your time is a ski-jump curve; the number of minutes in a day is a flat line. Very soon, we will reach peak attention. Just as \$4-a-gallon gas created a booming market for Priuses and Teslas, peak attention will create the conditions for new companies that use your time efficiently to thrive. It’s already happening: Some of these start-ups, such as Checky and Moment, exist explicitly to help users break free of the screen-addiction feedback loop; others are simply run by people who know that optimizing for time spent, above any other metric, yields lousy products and empty experiences. “The problem with time is it’s not actually measuring value,” Twitter co-founder Evan Williams recently wrote. “It’s measuring cost as a proxy for value.”

In fact, the most successful tech enterprise of the past 20 years arose from just this kind of thinking. Back before it was an omnipresent colossus that wanted to own every part of our lives, Google was just another start-up looking for a way into them. Larry Page and Sergey Brin faced a catch-22 in presenting search results: The faster they got a user to the right answer, the sooner that user jumped to another site. Rather than run from the paradox, Page and Brin embraced it, believing users would be smart enough to return to a service that treated their time as valuable. Google has had its share of misfires over the years, but its search tool is the rare tech product that shows no sign of becoming obsolete.

Anyone want to start the next Google?

BY  
**JEFF  
BERCOVICI**







WHY NO ONE CAN RESIST HEATHER DEPRIEST.



A MASTERFUL CHAT WITH LIZZY CAPLAN.



NOTHING KEEPS BOXER JOHN JOE NEVIN DOWN.

## NEXT MONTH



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**WAR OF THE WORLDS**—JOSHUA FOUST OF THE FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE LOOKS AT THE RISE OF ISIS AND OUR FAILED EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, SYRIA AND AROUND THE WORLD TO DETERMINE WHY AMERICA KEEPS LOSING ON THE BATTLEFIELD. HIS CONCLUSION? CONVENTIONAL WARFARE DOESN'T WORK ANYMORE.

**AZIZ ANSARI**—THE COMEDIAN TURNED WRITER GIVES *PLAYBOY* AN EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT FROM HIS NEW BOOK, *MODERN ROMANCE*, IN WHICH HE TACKLES PERHAPS THE GREATEST QUANDARY OF ALL TIME: WHY AM I SINGLE?

**THE FIGHTER**—JOHN JOE NEVIN IS AN OLYMPIC-MEDAL-WINNING BOXER FROM IRELAND WHO HAS HAD HIS FAIR SHARE OF HARDSHIP. BOTH HIS LEGS WERE BROKEN BY A COUSIN LAST YEAR, AND HE'S HAD SCUFFLES WITH THE LAW. BUT NEVIN IS ALREADY BACK IN THE RING AND EVEN HAS HIS

SIGHTS ON THE WORLD TITLE IN 2016. **TIM STRUBY** TRAVELS TO IRELAND TO MEET A MAN PUTTING UP ONE HELL OF A FIGHT.

**JEREMY RENNER**—FRESH FROM SMASHING BOX OFFICE RECORDS IN THE *AVENGERS* SEQUEL, **JEREMY RENNER** GOES FOR MORE BLOCKBUSTER GOLD IN THE LATEST CHAPTER OF *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE*. IN THE *PLAYBOY* INTERVIEW, THE REVERED INDIE ACTOR-ACTION STAR TELLS **STEPHEN REBELLO** ABOUT THE GOOD (FATHERHOOD, OGLING JENNIFER LOPEZ), THE BAD (AWKWARDLY LOSING HIS VIRGINITY) AND THE UGLY (A MESSY AND PUBLIC DIVORCE).

**SEX ED**—AS SEX RESEARCHER VIRGINIA JOHNSON ON *MASTERS OF SEX*, **LIZZY CAPLAN** SPENDS A LOT OF TIME IN THE BUFF. IN *20Q*, THE ACTRESS REVEALS EVEN MORE TO **DAVID RENSIN**, INCLUDING HER SCARY RUN-IN WITH A MEATLOAF PENIS AS A KID, HER CURSE-LADEN BRAWL WITH A GARBAGE COLLECTOR AND HER FAVORITE TYPE OF UNDERWEAR—ON MEN AND ON HERSELF.

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THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS  
Cuckoo Clock

"Boys and girls of every age

Wouldn't you like to see something strange?"

Tim Burton and Disney certainly thought you might when they created the masterpiece *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, and for 20 years audiences have been clamoring for more. Now, an all-new treasure captures the spectacular spookiness of this family favorite in the officially licensed *The Nightmare Before Christmas Cuckoo Clock*, proudly presented by The Bradford Exchange.

**Lights... music....motion!**

Towering a grand 21 inches high, this sculptural first of its kind features hand-painted elements in vivid, nightmarish colors. At the flip of a switch, the windows of Jack's Tower, the ghosts, and pumpkins illuminate with glowing light for perfectly spooky ambience.

And what would any tribute to *The Nightmare Before Christmas* be without its famous music? Instead of a traditional cuckoo on the hour, this clock plays "This is Halloween" while Zero pops in and out of the doors atop the Town Hall.

The clock is powered by a precision quartz movement and features an embellished clock face complete with spider web design. A swinging brass-toned pendulum is decorated with the Halloween Town Spiral Hill. Decorative pine cone weights hang below, with Shock and Barrel clinging to them!

**Your satisfaction is guaranteed**

This one-of-its-kind timepiece is custom crafted in a limited edition and strong demand is expected. So act now to acquire the *The Nightmare Before Christmas Cuckoo Clock* at its issue price, payable in four monthly installments of \$49.99 each, for a total of \$199.95\*. Your purchase is risk-free, backed by our 365-day guarantee. Send no money now. Just mail the Reservation Application today!

[www.bradfordexchange.com/nightmareclock](http://www.bradfordexchange.com/nightmareclock)

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



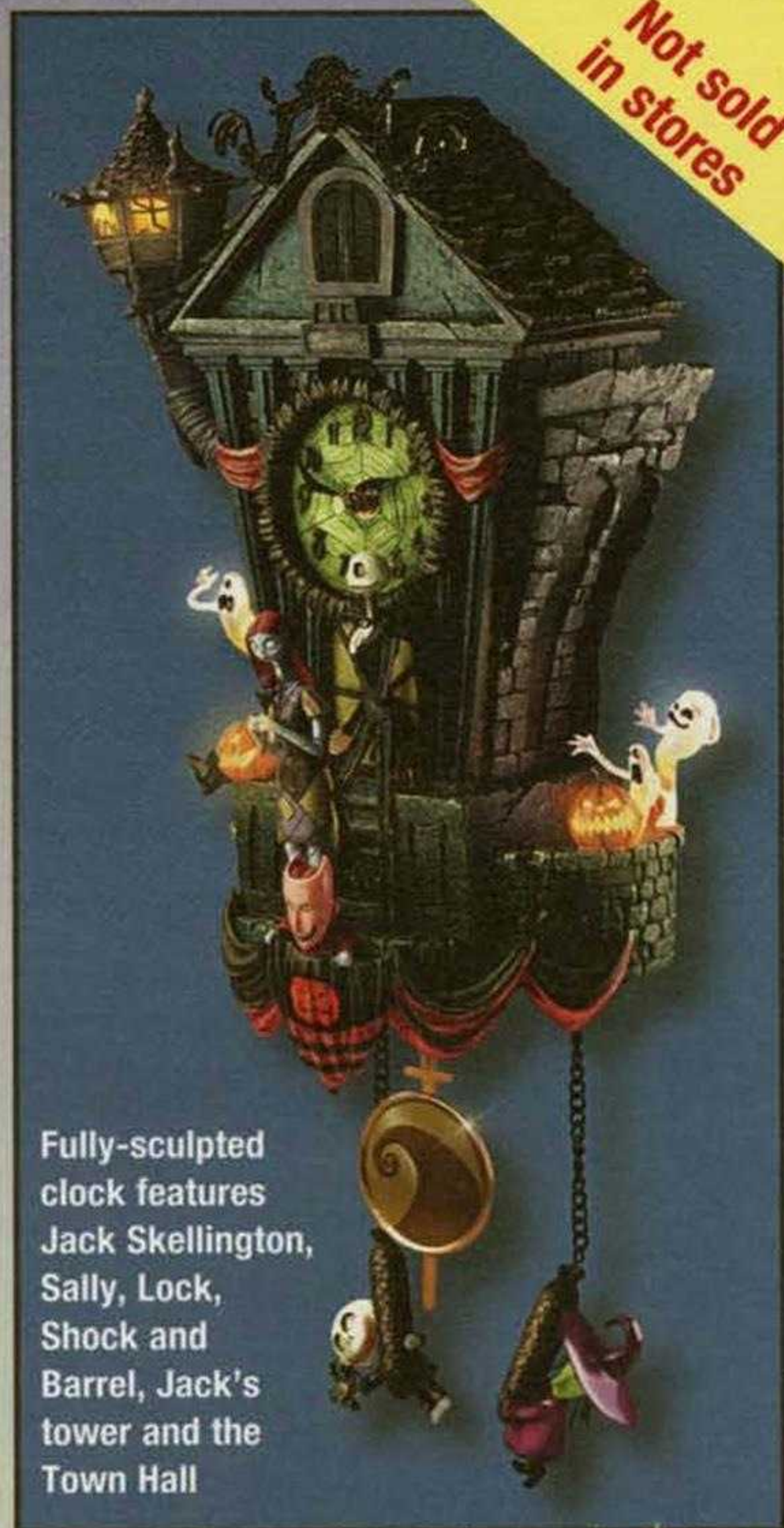
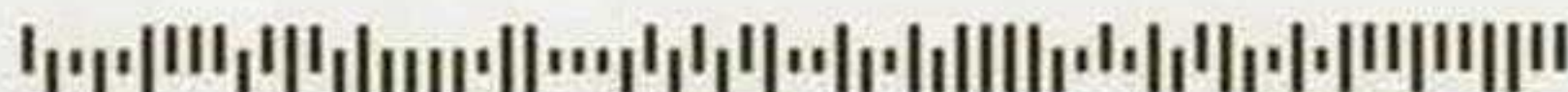
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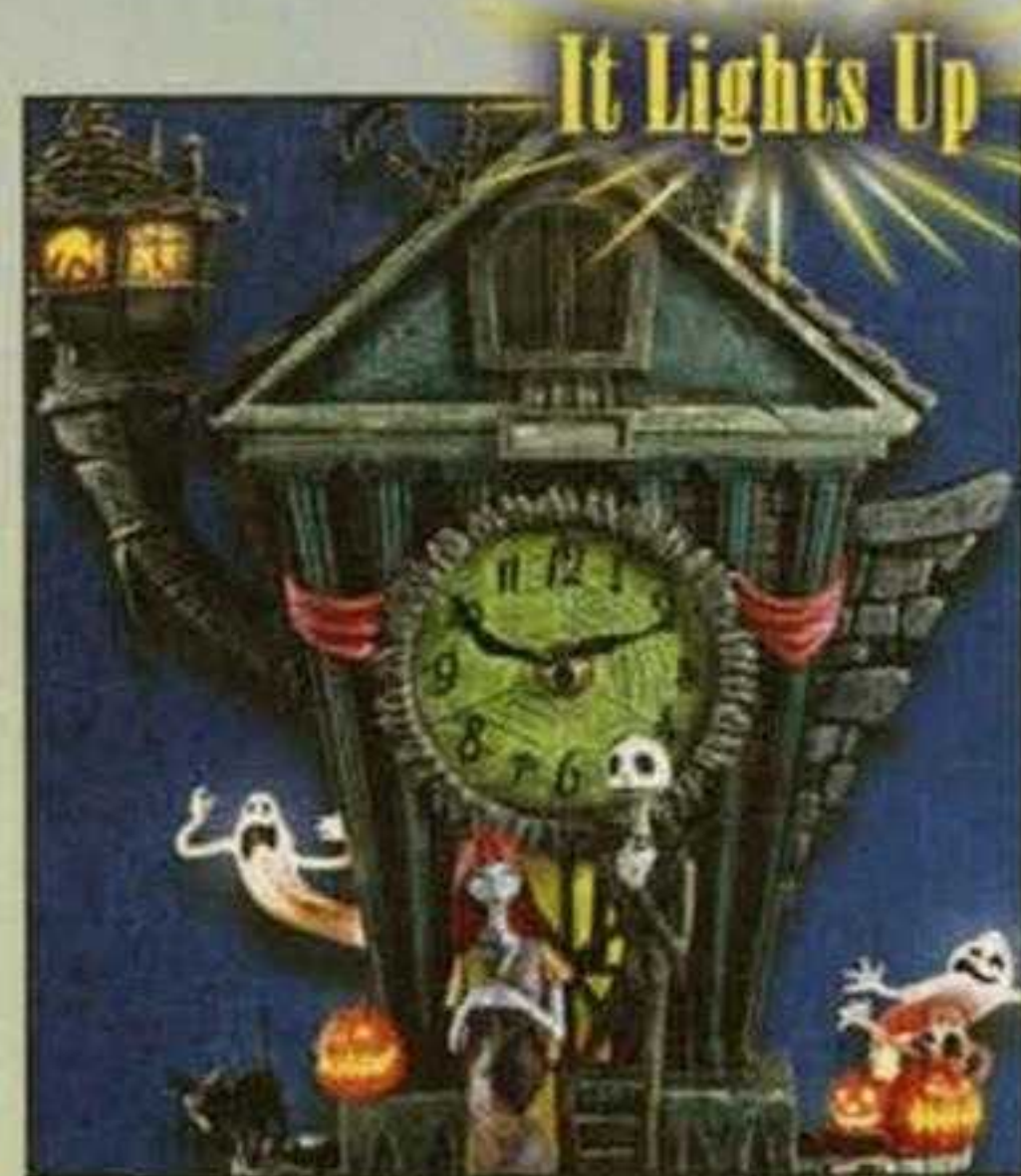
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Fully-sculpted clock features Jack Skellington, Sally, Lock, Shock and Barrel, Jack's tower and the Town Hall



Jack's Tower, the pumpkins, and ghosts are brilliantly illuminated with LED lights within, either on the hour, or with a switch so you can control the lighting.

Over, please ...

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# HONOR, COURAGE *and* COMMITMENT

## USMC TRIBUTE RING

**LIMITED TO ONLY 5,000**

A Limited Edition  
Custom Jewelry Exclusive from  
The Bradford Exchange



Comes in a deluxe wood  
presentation case with  
engraved plaque



Expertly hand-crafted in solid sterling silver

Gleaming with rich 18K gold plating

Featuring a custom cut genuine  
black onyx center stone

Engraved with the noble  
values of the United States Marines

**NOT  
AVAILABLE  
IN STORES!**

Over, please...

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### LIMITED-TIME OFFER

Reservations will be accepted on a  
**first-come-first-served basis.**  
Respond as soon as possible to  
reserve your ring.



Magnificently  
detailed from  
every angle

Actual Size

\*Plus \$15.00 shipping and service.  
Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery  
of your jewelry after we receive your  
initial deposit. Sales subject to product  
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### RESERVATION APPLICATION

**SEND NO MONEY NOW**

**THE  
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JEWELRY**

P.O. Box 806, Morton Grove, IL 60053-0806

**YES.** Please reserve the "Honor, Courage &  
Commitment" USMC Tribute Ring for me as described in this  
announcement. **SATISFACTION GUARANTEED**  
To assure a proper fit, a ring sizer will be sent to you after your reservation  
has been accepted.

Signature

Mrs. Mr. Ms.

Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address

City

State

Zip

E-Mail (Optional)

**01-18594-001-E30201**





# FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO WEAR WITH PRIDE

LIMITED TO ONLY 5,000



## HONOR, COURAGE AND COMMITMENT USMC TRIBUTE RING

Steadfast in their core values, Marines have dedicated their lives to the noble tradition of serving their country with honor, courage and commitment. Now, you can show your allegiance to the enduring *Semper Paratus* spirit of the United States Marine Corps like never before, with a new limited-edition jewelry exclusive as distinctive as the Marines that it salutes.

### A Singular Achievement in Craftsmanship and Design

Our "Honor, Courage and Commitment" USMC Tribute Ring is individually crafted in solid sterling silver with 18K gold plating, and features the Marine Corps emblem of eagle, globe and anchor in raised relief against a custom-cut genuine black onyx center stone. The striking contrast of silver and gold continues in the rope borders that

surrounds the central emblem and the sculpted eagles on each side. Adding to the meaning and value, the ring is engraved inside the band with: *Honor • Courage • Commitment* and *United States Marines*.

### Limited to Only 5,000... Order Now!

A bold statement of everything Marines stand for, this custom ring comes in a deluxe wood case with a plaque engraved with the same words that are on the ring, and includes a Certificate of Authenticity. An exceptional value at \$249\*, you can pay for your ring in 6 easy installments of \$41.50. To reserve yours, backed by our unconditional 120-day guarantee, send no money now. Just mail the Reservation Application. But hurry... this edition is strictly limited to only 5,000!

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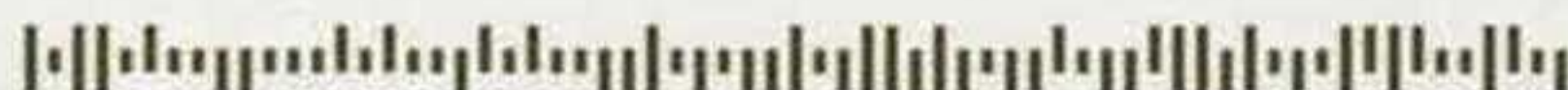
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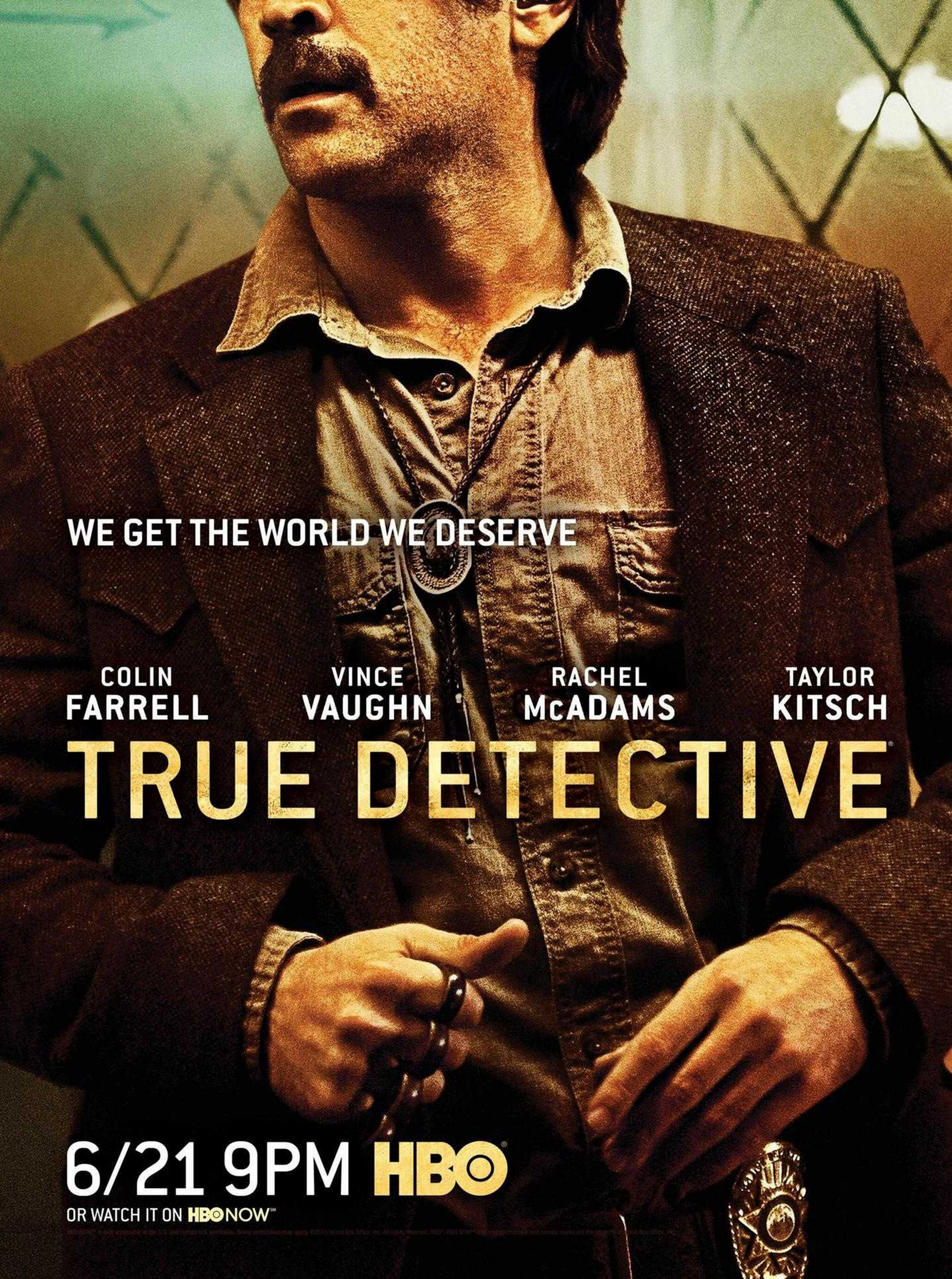


NOT  
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IN STORES!



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A promotional poster for the TV series True Detective. It features a close-up of a man with a mustache, wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt and a bolo tie. He is looking upwards and to the left. The background is a blurred, warm-toned interior. The text is overlaid on the image.

WE GET THE WORLD WE DESERVE

COLIN  
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# TRUE DETECTIVE®

6/21 9PM **HBO**®

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